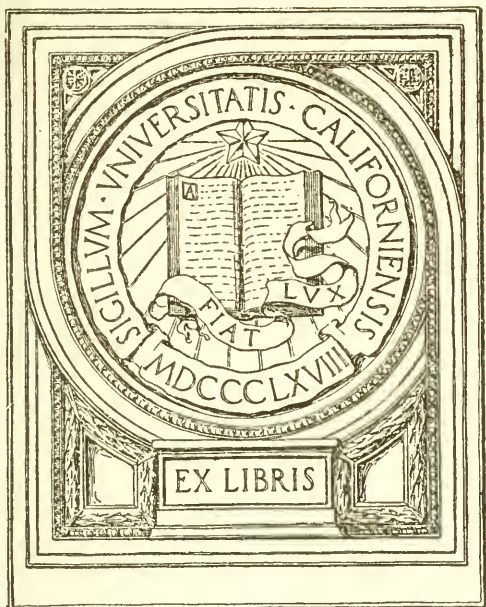


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DOUGLAS JERROLD

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Douglas Jerrold.

DOUGLAS JERROLD

DRAMATIST AND WIT

BY

WALTER JERROLD

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

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TO
THE DESCENDANTS OF
DOUGLAS JERROLD
GRANDCHILDREN, GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN
AND GREAT-GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN
(UPWARDS OF FIFTY IN NUMBER)
THIS RECORD OF THEIR ANCESTOR'S LIFE AND WORK
IS DEDICATED

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PREFACE

It is now more than twenty years since the editor of *St. Nicholas* invited the last surviving daughter of Douglas Jerrold to contribute a paper on her father's early life to that magazine; this my aunt was unwilling to do, and asked that I should be permitted to write the article instead. Later she expressed the hope that I would some day undertake the work which I have here completed, and gave me to that end such materials as remained in her possession. A biography of Douglas Jerrold was written shortly after his death by his eldest son, William Blanchard Jerrold, but in the years that have elapsed since then nearly all the people who knew the dramatist, who had listened to his wit, have passed away; some of these lived to write their reminiscences of the old time, others have in turn become the subjects of biography, and the belongings of others—including such letters, papers and books as are the raw material for the biographer—have been scattered by the rise and fall of the auctioneer's hammer. Thus it is that fresh material has become available for giving more completely the story of the life of Douglas Jerrold.

Such fuller story should at least prove serviceable in correcting the errors concerning Jerrold which are to be found in most works of reference, as well as certain others which have been quoted again and again as facts but which research shows to be fictions. It may be said that where in this work statements and dates differ from those given in the established works of reference, in the earlier biography, or biographical articles, the present work has the authority of immediately contemporary documentary or printed evidence.

Novelist and essayist, satirist and wit, journalist and dramatist, Douglas Jerrold exercised his pen in so many directions that in the regard of those who think that the cobbler should stick to his last his reputation may have suffered from the very multiplicity of ways in which his talents were manifested. He is said to have been impatient of the fact that that which was not the best of his work was that which gave him the greatest popularity.

The writer of close upon seventy plays, he realised that there were among them many better than *Black-Eyed Susan*, which was the most widely known of his writings for the stage; and when he described the *Chronicles of Clovernook* as containing some of his best work, he knew that its vogue was not a tithe of a tithe of that of the *Caudle Lectures*. Then, too, the fact that he was a wit militated somewhat against full recognition of the strong purpose which informed most that he wrote, and he chafed against that knowledge. In this volume I have sought simply to tell the story of his life, to indicate something of the character of his varied work, and to show what manner of man he was in the regard of those who knew him.

For generous assistance I offer grateful thanks: To Mr. Bertram Dobell for thoughtful help over many years; to him I owe the only copy I know of the *Anti-Punch* booklet, herein first drawn attention to, a copy of the scarce twopenny pamphlet, *Life of Douglas Jerrold*, published in 1857, several of the rarer printed plays and other materials. To Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton for the gift of his copies of Jerrold's dramas—a prized collection including some that appear to be unique. To Sir James Yoxall, M.P., for a precious specimen of the "Caudle" bottle (depicted opposite p. 4, vol. ii. To Mr. Thomas Catling, who entered the service of *Lloyds* in 1854, and in due course succeeded to the editorial chair, for friendly help. To the late Mr. T. F. Dillon-Croker for assistance in tracing the early plays. To Mr. E. Y. Lowne for a copy of his Elliston letter concerning the writing of *Black-Eyed Susan*—though that letter destroys a time-honoured story! To Captain Christie-Crawford for additions to my portraits of Douglas Jerrold. To Mr. A. S. E. Aekermann for the photograph of West Lodge. To Mr. William Roberts for a copy of the rules and list of members of "Our Club" and other assistance. To Miss Hutchison Stirling for my grandfather's letters to her distinguished father; and to Miss F. Rathbone, Mr. A. M. Broadley, Mr. H. B. Wheatley and others for the loan of letters.

WALTER JERROLD.

Hampton-on-Thames,
May 1914.

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

1803-1816

MUCH as the theatre has been written about in these days, there is one aspect of theatrical life which seems, except in personal memoirs and as episodic in theatrical histories, to have escaped the attention of the student—it is that of the provincial theatres and the theatrical “circuits” of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of the central establishments in London, the places in which stage plays were represented by companies that retained the title of royal servants long after princely salaries had been substituted for royal wages, much has been written, but of those strolling companies which periodically visited the various towns and villages on their particular “circuits,” we have apparently no tentative chronicle—anything approaching a complete history would probably now be impossible. There are references to such companies in the lives of some of the players who won to wider fame, in letters and memoirs and in the periodicals of the time, but of connected history as yet it appears nothing. Such a history is too wide and too remotely connected

with my present subject to call for treatment here, for I have particularly to deal with but one strolling player, and with him only as introductory to the story of his son. From the scattered scraps in lives and reminiscences of actors who passed from the position of "strollers" to that of "stars," the story of those old days may, perhaps, yet be pieced together. We see the actors moving from place to place with almost bewildering rapidity, but it is generally as a genial, friendly company, accepting the rough with the smooth in a delightfully philosophic fashion—professional nomads who by day were sometimes in difficulties as to where they could find lodgings, and by night were playing the parts of spectacular heroes and kings. Heroes many of them were, it would seem, in their daily lives, though the heroism was not of a kind to impress the onlookers. Rogues and vagabonds¹ in the eyes of the law, they were carrying the glamour of wonder and poetry into all sorts of unexpected places in days before the schoolmaster was abroad. It is small wonder that the appearance of the players often moved adventurous youth to throw in its lot with them, and

¹ In illustration of this old status of the actor I have come across an amusing story of Charles Macklin. Having to visit a fire office in connection with the insurance of some property, the actor was asked how he would be pleased to have his name entered. "Entered?" said the veteran. "Why, I am only plain Charles Macklin, a *vagabond* by Act of Parliament; but in compliment to the times, you may set me down *Esquire*, as they are now synonymous terms."

to seek fortune in their company. The way in which the old circuit companies moved about is amusingly shown by one who ran away from the City life to which he was indentured, and who subsequently justified his running away by the position which he took after serving a new apprenticeship to the fascinating life of the strolling player. The circuit companies seem to have had, as the name implies, a regular round of towns and villages in which they appeared, and to have dated happenings and events by their successive appearances in such places.

In 1789, the earliest date to which I can trace him, Samuel Jerrold, a member of the Dover company of players, and also, it is said, their printer—a doubling of parts which may well appear strange in the twentieth century—was acting at Eastbourne. Thither came a youth of eighteen, a runaway apprentice from London, who was accepted as a member of the company under the name of “S. Merchant,” but who was to become known to fame as Thomas John Dibdin. To Dibdin’s *Reminiscences*, published nearly forty years later, we owe a first glimpse of the Jerrold family.

It was in 1789 that Dibdin, at the age of eighteen, set out with an introduction to Mr. Mate of the Margate Theatre, got there to learn that the company was full up and to be sent on with a letter—“not such a letter as this *advising*, but one *commanding* my deputy manager, Mr. Richland, to give you an imme-

diate engagement, and put you on a footing with the first actor in the company.” Dibdin tramped from Margate to Dover, only to find that the company was at Eastbourne, and on to that town he was compelled to continue his tramping.

“ On entering the village, I felt no small anxiety lest the ‘ Dover Company ’ should have again moved forwards, and my journey, consequently, be not at its close; but, to my great delight, I saw the last night’s playbill affixed to a post; and while I was loud in my mirth at something whimsical in its style of commencement, a farmer, who supposed me one of the *corps dramatique*, exclaimed as he passed, ‘ Addrott’n, there you be laughing at your own roguery ! ’

“ When we came to the inn, the first thing I saw was my little valise, which had arrived the day before, addressed to the care of the manager: I wished to have improved my dress a little before I waited on the great man, forgetting that it would be first necessary to receive my wardrobe from himself. The moment I claimed acquaintance with the parcel, and asked a waiter where the manager lived, a very shrewd-looking and rather handsome lad of about fourteen replied, ‘ Mr. Richland, sir, is in the house; and if you are the *new gentleman* he expects, will be very happy to see you.’ This youth was nephew of the manager, his name Jerrold, to which he subsequently added a Fitz, and afterwards became manager of the Theatre Royal, York, in which circuit he some two years since died.

“ The idea of meeting the manager in my dusty dishabille was rather unpleasant, but before I could express myself to that effect, young Jerrold threw

open a door, and I was instantaneously in the presence of Mr. Richland, manager; Mr. Russell (the since far-famed 'Jerry Sneak' of Drury Lane Theatre, and now the merry manager of Brighton), deputy manager . . . Mr. Parsons, a serious actor who always laughed, sat next to a melancholy comedian, father of the youth Jerrold, who had so suddenly 'let me in,' to this long-sought society; and whose greatest professional importance arose from the inspiring circumstance of his being possessed of 'a real pair of the great Mr. Garrick's own shoes,' in which the happy Jerrold played every part assigned to him, and consequently maintained a most respectable standing in the theatre. I still see the delight with which his eyes sparkled when he exhibited these relics of the mighty Roscius to me for the first time, and his stare of admiration on learning that the 'new gentleman' was really and truly no more nor less than a genuine godson of the immortal G."

Dibdin gave the company a taste of his quality in a song which was well received, and "Jerrold swore by Garrick's shoes it was excellent."

"When I obtained leave to retire, and got possession of my valise, it was on condition I returned in an hour to dine with the jolly set, and bring my travelling companion with me. Little Jerrold was printer to the corps; and as I was leaving the room, he asked under what name he should have the honour to insert my *début* in the playbill. 'Sir,' replied I, 'my name is Norval.' 'True, sir, upon the Grampian Hills; but your real name.'"

The new gentleman chose the name of Merchant—his own name, as the son of Charles

Dibdin of sea-song fame, and as a runaway apprentice, not yet being safe for use in his new work.

“Little Jerrold” presumably refers to Samuel, —for Robert, a boy of fourteen, was not very likely to be the printer to the corps.

From Dibdin we learn that at Eastbourne the Dover Company was acting in a large barn, and that the members of the company were not salaried, but were playing on sharing terms, the arrangement being that after a certain amount of the money taken had been put aside for rent, servants and tradesmen, the rest was divided into a certain number of parts, six of which went to the manager, and one to each other member of the company, with a little extra for the one who added to his other duties that of prompter. Most of these companies of itinerant Thespians were formed on such lines. From an old account of one of them I find that, supposing the number of the company to be sixteen, “the profits of each night are divided into twenty parts or shares, and the extra four assigned to the manager for clothes, scenery, etc. The only advantage a good actor has in such a scheme is the attention paid to his benefit, because nightly, Macbeth and the Murderer retire with the same mass of wealth.”

Another glimpse of the Jerrold family is shown by Dibdin. When the time came for the “new gentleman” to claim a benefit he thought that he would like to play *Werter*,

but the play had not been printed, and the company had no copy of it.

“What then? They were acting it at Brighton only eighteen miles distant; and as my mother happened to be there, I determined to visit her, obtain amnesty for my elopement and use her interest with good-natured Jem Wild (prompter at Brighton and Covent Garden), to borrow or copy the tragedy. As I played every night, and had to rehearse every day, I had no other mode of accomplishing my wish than that of leaving Eastbourne on a Saturday night after the farce was over, staying Sunday at Brighton, and returning on Monday morning. Young Jerrold, or Fitzgerald, offered to accompany me: we left Eastbourne as the church clock struck midnight; but the moon was up, the breeze was beautiful, the road romantic, and we had cheered our spirits with a good supper at the Lamb. We marched merrily along till near Seaford; when the moon having retired, our direct road grew rather difficult to be distinguished, as it lay over a waste down, bordered with tremendous cliffs. As the sky became more obscure, a proportionably brilliant, but terrific effect was produced by the sudden glare of innumerable signals of fire along the whole line of coast, proceeding from flash-boxes; and as we passed the end of a gloomy defile, cut in a chalk road in the direction of the sea, we were suddenly met by about two hundred horses, ridden or led by perhaps half that number of smugglers, all well armed, and each horse carrying as many casks of ‘moonlight’ as could be slung on his back. They challenged us with much simplicity, asked where we were going; and on being informed, said we must not proceed further in that direction, but accompany them for a few miles, when they would set us down in

a place much nearer Brighton than we then were : this arrangement was imparted in a good-natured tone, but yet one of so much decision, that we had no alternative but to fall in with their humour. They insisted on our each just tasting a glass of godsend, as they chose to christen some excellent brandy ; and the next moment the godson of Garrick, the Incedon of Eastbourne, and the pupil of Sir William, was seated between two tubs on a tall black mare ; and little Bob Jerrold, bestriding a cask of contraband, on the back of a Shetland pony. We rode silently along for a few minutes, when an athletic horseman, in a white round frock, came close to me with rather a meaning air, and asked whether I could not sing ‘ Poor Jack ’ ; and before I could answer, burst into a laugh, by which I discovered him to be the brother of my landlord at Eastbourne : he added, they had made a capital night’s work, and should soon be ‘ at home ’ —meaning, as I afterwards learned, their general depot in another part of the cliffs ; but that if we had continued our advance and happened to mention the sort of cavalcade we had encountered, there might be those upon the alert who would probably have pursued, and given them some trouble. In about an hour we were liberated with a caution, that it would be ‘ as well ’ to say nothing about the good company we had been in. It was now daybreak ; and by the directions they gave, we reached Brighton at an early hour, breakfasted at an inn, and as soon as I thought my mother would be visible, I sent young Jerrold to her with a letter.”

One reference in Dibdin’s remarks is puzzling, and that is where he refers to Robert Jerrold as nephew to Richland. If the statement is correct Mrs. Richland must have been Samuel

Jerrold's sister, but of his parentage and family I have been able to ascertain nothing. The most probable explanation is that Dibdin's memory was at fault, and that instead of "Richland" he should have written "Copeland," for I have found no other mention than Dibdin's of a theatrical Richland.

The Dover Company seems to have had its circuit about the Kent and Sussex towns, and in 1800 the name of Samuel Jerrold still appears in it when the players were at Lewes—perhaps by then he had his own company. The actor who had the Dover circuit at this time was Robert Copeland—of the Copelands of Belnagan, co. Neath—whose son, born in 1799, was also to become an actor in due course, and to marry a daughter of Samuel Jerrold.¹ When Dibdin met Jerrold in Eastbourne, the latter, presumably already a widower—his first wife, *née* Simpson, is said to have been an actress—was the father of two sons, the Robert mentioned, and a younger one named Charles. Between 1789 and 1800, however, Samuel Jerrold seems to have sought his fortunes further afield, and may possibly for a time have been a member of the Derbyshire or York circuits. Possibly several members of

¹ The Jerrold and Copeland families again intermarried, for a daughter of this union in 1858 married a son of Douglas Jerrold—in consequence of which the author of this biography and his brothers and sisters all bear the mid-name of Copeland. Robert Copeland's daughter, Fanny Elizabeth (1801–1854), at fifteen "leading actress" in her father's company, is best remembered under her married name as Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

the Dover Company may thus have travelled north, for Robert Copeland's wife is said to have been a member of a Yorkshire family named Longbottom, with traditional descent from the family of Bishop Fell immortalized in epigram. Certainly Samuel Jerrold was in Derbyshire, for at the small town of Wirksworth, some miles to the south of Matlock, he married his second wife. He may have been thus far from his usual "circuit" professionally, for his second wife was presumably already an actress, as also possibly was her mother. That there was certainly a theatre at Wirksworth I have ascertained, for in 1801 the Stafford Company of actors is reported to have had a season there. At Wirksworth Church "Samuel Jerrold and Mary Reid both of this parish" were married on April 20, 1794.

The second Mrs. Samuel Jerrold was much younger than her husband, being about two and twenty—indeed, her mother (*née* Douglas) is said to have been younger than her son-in-law. Within nine years two daughters and two sons were born to this couple,¹ who seem at once to have removed to the south, and the usual scenes of Samuel Jerrold's professional activities, for, as has been said, Jerrold's name appears in a contemporary paragraph as among the

¹ Elizabeth Sarah, who married William Robert Copeland; Jane Matilda, who married William John Hammond; Henry, at different times a printer and actor; and Douglas William, the subject of this memoir.

actors in 1800 at the Lewes Theatre, though the "Mr. Jerrold" there noted may possibly have been his son Robert. It is, however, significant that the company also included a "Mrs. Read" who may have been his mother-in-law. Lewes was probably but the temporary headquarters of the circuit company. In 1802, Samuel Jerrold's company was acting at Watford, for thither in that year one William Oxberry "fled from his former shackles on the wings of hope," duly obtained an engagement, made a start as Antonio in the *Merchant of Venice*, and began a successful career as a comedian. Another actor of some importance in his day also made his start under Samuel Jerrold's auspices at Watford, for it is recorded of Thomas Cobham (1789-1842) that his "first public essay took place at Watford in Hertfordshire, fifteen miles from the Metropolis. The company assembled at this place was collected by Mr. Jerrold, father of the late York manager. The members for the most part were young in their calling, but we are to infer that they possessed considerable talent, for most of them have risen to eminence in their profession. Among them was the late Mr. Oxberry, whose rich comic powers were here first called into action. From Watford the company went to St. Albans."¹ It is worthy of note that Cobham was another instance of a printer's apprentice becoming an actor.

¹ *Mirror of the Stage*, July 26, 1824.

In the winter of 1802-3 the Jerrolds appear to have been in London, whether professionally or in the green-room euphemism of a latter day "resting," it is now impossible to determine. During this visit Mrs. Samuel Jerrold gave birth on January 3, 1803—it has been said in Greek Street, Soho—to a son who duly received the names of Douglas William; the first of these being the maiden name of the child's maternal grandmother, a Scotswoman.

In youngest infancy Douglas was carried down into Kent, to the village of Willsley, (Wilsby in the earlier biography is obviously a misprint) near the small town of Cranbrook, where his father had the theatre—he was described as "proprietor of many Theatres *Rural*"—and there he passed his earliest years. Very little is definitely known of his childhood, except that, owing to the fact of both his parents being upon the stage, his bringing up largely devolved upon his grandmother Reid. To-day it may seem remarkable that over a century ago a little town such as Cranbrook should have possessed a theatre, even of the humblest character. It would, of course, have only been occupied for brief seasons during the circuit of the company, but it may well have been that this was the manager's family headquarters. Thither came some aspirants to stage honours, and at least two actors who were to achieve popularity made their debut here, for it is recorded in Oxberry's *Dramatic Biography* that:

“ In the year 1806 John Pritt Harley bade adieu to quill-driving, and quitting declarations, records, and *pad*, padded off to Cranbrook (Kent), where the late Mr. Jerrold was astonishing the natives, with a company particularly select, but by no means numerous. Harley had but little knowledge of the technicalities of his new profession, or what is usually termed the ‘ business of the stage,’ and, as most *managers* look on this as the criterion of merit, Mr. Jerrold cast him but few characters and those of no considerable importance. At this period Wilkinson (now of the Adelphi and Haymarket) was a fellow labourer in the same vineyard, and in possession of most of the parts to which our hero aspired. Here Mr. Harley paid his addresses to Miss Riley (daughter of Mrs. Inchbald, a well-known provincial actress), but, alas, his suit miscarried.”

Not for very long, however, were the lines of the child cast in places as pleasant as amid the pastoral peacefulness and simplicity of the country around Cranbrook, for in January 1807 his parents removed their household and professional lares and penates to Sheerness, where Samuel Jerrold had recently acquired the lease of the theatre situated in High Street, Blue Town. He had been acting there in the autumn of the year in which his famous son was born, but Willsley appears to have been the family home.

Despite his extreme youthfulness at this time of leaving the open air and quiet country life for the dinginess and turmoil of a busy seaport at a period of great naval activity, Douglas Jerrold carried away with him lively

recollections of rural Kent, and an abiding love for country sights and sounds. That love is manifested in many of his writings, and notably in the *Chronicles of Clovernook*, where we seem to get some actual reminiscences of the pastoral scenery around Cranbrook.

Sheerness, when the Jerrold family entered into regular possession of the theatre situated in the High Street of "Blue Town," was an important and lively naval centre. Napoleon's projected invasion of England was but of very recent occurrence, and the Corsican was each year more thoroughly dominating Europe. The Kentish seaport was always full of seamen and officers about to join their ships, or loitering ashore while those same "wooden walls of old England" were being refitted or repaired. British enthusiasm with regard to the Navy was perhaps during those stirring times at its very height; but two years earlier Trafalgar had been fought and won, Nelson's name was enshrined in every heart, Dibdin's songs were heard on every tongue.

Of the theatre of Sheerness few facts appear now recoverable. It is not represented in the interesting series of views of provincial theatres given in the *Theatre Tourist* of 1805, and it received but scant attention in the brief notes about the doings at country theatres contributed to those periodicals which recognised the exploits of actors in the provinces. There is, however, one early notice that may

be quoted of a performance shortly after the Jerrolds had entered into possession. It was sent by a correspondent to the *Monthly Mirror*, that repository of things theatrical. The theatre at Sheerness, wrote this correspondent on November 17, 1803 :

“ Opened about a month since, with a respectable company, under the management of Mr. Jerrold. On Monday, November 14, the theatre was honoured by the presence of the Port Admiral and a very brilliant assemblage of elegance and fashion, to see the comedy of *John Bull*. Job Thornberry was represented by a Mr. Cobham, who entered fully into the spirit of the part, and exhibited, with much pathos, the manly energy and parental affection which the author intended to portray. Sir Simon, Frank Rochdale and Shuffleton, were respectably performed by Messrs. Jerrold, Holding and Moore, and the sentiments of Peregrine were delivered by Mr. Sealy with correctness and propriety. Dennis Brulgruddery was performed by Mr. Davis, who merits a very high degree of approbation, for the comic humour he exhibited, and Mr. Oxberry’s “Dan” was certainly a most humorous and correct performance. Miss Henderson in the character of Mary Thornberry was extremely interesting, and Mrs. Jerrold and Mrs. Simeock deserve praise for their performance of *Lady Caroline Braymore* and Mrs. Brulgruddery. The farce (*Of Age To-morrow*) was received with very considerable approbation, and the company seems likely to be successful. The theatre is fitted up with more than usual elegance.”

It is probable that this was only a seasonal visit to Sheerness, for according to Blanchard

Jerrold it was not until January 27, 1807, that Samuel Jerrold became actual lessee of the theatre there.

In one of John Duncombe's small theatrical publications—*The Roscius*, of August 9, 1825—there are some references to the Sheerness Theatre under Samuel Jerrold's management, which were, it seems not unlikely, contributed by Samuel Jerrold's son, who, as we see later, was among Duncombe's writers. The references occur in a brief biographical notice of James Russell, one of the stars of the English Opera House at the time :

“ He was destined at an early age for the study of medicine; but as he more frequently looked into Shakespeare than Galen, the drama won an adherent from the disciples of physic, and our hero, at the very mature age of eighteen (in 1807), engaged with the manager of the Sheerness Theatre, and commenced his dramatic labours as (we believe) Hogmore in Colman's comedy of *Who wants a Guinea?* This effort, we are informed, gave promise of the young adventurer's ability, and Monsieur La Rolle, in *The Young Hussar*, confirmed every hope of his future success; and young Mr. Russell was considered an acquisition to a theatre which has had many of our first actors on its boards, but which never boasted an audience capable of distinguishing humour from vulgarity—passion from bombast. The Sheerness folks were not the most punctilious critics—a clog-hornpipe and a comic song were their most dainty delights; and we are well assured that the talented Edmund Kean never won such ‘golden opinions’ by his then exquisite delineation of Jaffier and young

Selim, as by the elasticity and sprightliness of his quaint Harlequin.

“At the time Mr. Russell joined the Sheerness Company, Messrs. Harley and Wilkinson were enrolled in that splendid corps, and even then, the actors who now retain the highest places on the London stage may have mutually exchanged the loans of comedy-wigs and shoe-buckles. At this period, nothing augmented Mr. Russell’s fame in the opinion of the town as the truly exquisite, though now somewhat antique, air of *Mrs. Waddle was a Widow*, which gained for the vocalist a most flattering estimation among the frequenters of the theatre, almost wholly composed of ‘hearts of oak,’ with the ivy (*vulgo*, sea-port nymphs) clinging around them.”

Douglas Jerrold was, we are told—and his later writings would have alone sufficed to show it—a remarkably impressionable boy, and amid such surroundings it is not surprising to find that he early evinced a desire to go to sea, a desire that was not, we may be sure, in any way lessened by his being brought into contact with the seamen and officers who crowded to the theatre, and made Sheerness an important centre in the Kentish circuit. About the same time that, or shortly after, his family took up their residence at Sheerness, Samuel Jerrold also acquired the lease of the Southend Theatre, at the opposite side of the Thames estuary.

His earliest education Douglas received at the knees of his grandmother Reid, later he had lessons from one of the stock actors in his

father's company, Wilkinson by name, who had made his first appearance on the boards at the little Cranbrook playhouse under the management of Samuel Jerrold, and who in later years was to be one of the popular actors of the metropolis. In 1809, then a child of between six and seven years of age, he went to school for a short while with a Mr. Herbert at Sheerness, and later with a Mr. Glass at Southend; but at the age of ten, all schooling in the ordinary sense of the word was at an end, and Douglas, a small, slightly built, fair-haired and fair-complexioned child, full of fire and energy, began the battle of life at a time when many boys are but just beginning the more serious stages of their schooling. His term under the tuition of Mr. Glass must have been very brief, for I have in my possession a "Christmas piece" carefully written out in a boyish hand which Douglas prepared at Christmas 1812, and this is said to have been written while he was at Mr. Herbert's school. This piece, with its crudely daubed representations of incidents in the life of Christ, its moral lesson and its signature, "Ds. Wm. Jerrold, Dec. 25, 1812," is a pleasant relic not only of Jerrold's boyhood but of school fashions at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

A letter written by one of his sisters about the same time is another interesting relic of a past style. This letter, directed to "Mrs. Jerrold, Theatre, Sheerness," was written on



The Mopsack



*Who ever shall wash the feet of such a stray
In his full & dust, and uncertain walk away
But feed his word his serving poor & wretched
O thy nation for ever but thy own Mopsack never*



*A wise man will desire no more
than what he may get justly
use solely, distribute cheerfully
and live upon contentedly*



By W. Gould Dec. 25, 1812

CHRISTMAS PIECE
(Written by Douglas Jerrold, Dec. 25, 1812)

December 5, 1812, from Restoration House, Rochester, the place which owes its name to the fact that there Charles II rested for the night on his way to London when he returned from exile. It runs :

“ I have deferred the pleasure I now feel in addressing my dear Mamma untill I could announce the Vacation, which commences on the 17 inst., when I hope on rejoining the family circle to find you and my Sister have perfectly recovered your health, and I trust the improvement I have endeavoured to make in those studies your kindness permits me to pursue will afford you some small degree of pleasure.

“ My Governess presents her Compliments begging you to offer my affectionate duty to my Papa and Grandmamma, love to my Brothers and Sister and Kind remembrances to all friends, believe me, dear Mamma,

“ Your affectionate Daughter,
E. S. JERROLD.”

Not thus formally do children address their parents nowadays. Elizabeth Jerrold, the writer of that letter, who was then somewhere about sixteen or seventeen years of age, was evidently the only member of the family at boarding school; her sister, Jane Matilda, was presumably at school at Sheerness, but of her schooling, and that of Henry, who perhaps preceded Douglas at Mr. Herbert's, there is no record. Indeed, of the family life there is little that is now recoverable. They probably had a dwelling-house at the theatre situated in that one of the four divisions of Sheer-

ness then known as Blue Town, but now largely annexed by the docks. The theatre, for which Samuel Jerrold paid one Jacob Johnson fifty pounds a year, was long since demolished, and its site taken for dock extension.

When Blanchard Jerrold visited Sheerness in 1858, already the theatre had gone, and only here and there from old inhabitants could he gather scraps of data about the family to whom that theatre had for about eight years been home. The most interesting of these old inhabitants was one Jogrum Brown, then sexton, who, employed in the dockyard by day, had acted as doorkeeper at the theatre in the evening. He had some unpretentious recollections :

“ Mr. Samuel Jerrold played, too, sometimes. . . . He couldn't say how big the theatre was, but he did remember well that on the night when the Russian Admiral was at Sheerness, and gave a 'bespeak,' there was £42. 18. in the house. This was the largest sum they ever took in a night. The prices were three shillings to the boxes, two shillings to the pit, and one shilling to the gallery. . . . Ay, many strange things happened to him while he was doorkeeper. He remembered Lord Cochrane well. He used to be often at the theatre when he was at Sheerness in the Pallas, and his lordship would always insist upon paying double.”

The fact that Cochrane “ paid double ” appears to have been the only “ strange thing ” he could recall, but he did offer a little personal

testimony by saying that Samuel Jerrold and his wife were much liked by the Sheerness people.

“ She was the more active manager, and was very kind. Once there was a landslip near Sheerness that carried a house and garden into the sea. Mrs. Jerrold was very good to the poor sufferers, and gave a benefit for them which realized £37.”

The theatre no doubt prospered in those days of activity in the busy centre, and across the Thames Samuel Jerrold had, besides, the theatre at the then village of Southend, where he and his wife also acted. That Southend was already utilised as a holiday resort we gather from the correspondent of a theatrical journal of over a century ago :

“ This theatre has been but thinly attended this season ; we are sorry to say the spirited exertions of the manager have not been seconded either by the visitors or the inhabitants. The company consists of Messrs. Gladstones, Ladbroke, Jerrold, Phillip, Burton, Thomlinson, St. Clair, Pym, Smith, Wilton, Mesdames Jerrold, Ladbroke, Thomlinson, Pryce, Miss Hartley and Miss West. It would be invidious to speak individually of performers where the whole are of the first respectability.”¹

¹ *Theatrical Inquisitor*, October 1812. In the same periodical three years later it is stated that John Pritt Harley (1786–1858) in July 1807 “ became a member of the companies of Mr. Gerald (*sic*) and Mrs. Baker the managress of the Southend and Canterbury Theatres,” and that he remained as principal comedian until February 1813.

The fact that Samuel Jerrold and his wife acted both at Sheerness and at Southend suggests that many must have been the trips of Douglas as a boy across the broad Thames' mouth from the one place to the other, trips that may have served to increase the desire for a sea life, and that love of the salt water which remained with him a lifelong passion.

As a child Douglas Jerrold is reported to have mixed but little in the sports and games of other children. Indeed, talking in later years of these early Sheerness days, he was wont laughingly to remark that his only companion had been "the little buoy at the Nore," and that "the only athletic sport he ever mastered was backgammon!" These remarks must not perhaps be taken too seriously, for as companion he had his brother Henry, who can have been at the most but three or four years older than himself, while many years afterwards one of "the oldest inhabitants" of Blue Town professed to remember the boy Douglas as a leader in the conflicts which took place between rival youthful factions of the locality. But even if we are to take the author's jocular remarks in all seriousness and to consider him as not altogether like other children in his ways, he certainly was not so in the catholicity of his reading, a passionate fondness for which was a notable characteristic. Gessner's *Death of Abel* and Smollett's *Roderick Random* were among his earliest books, and assuredly the child for whom such antipodal works could

have attraction must have been an omnivorous reader.

The glitter and excitement of the life of an actor do not seem to have attracted the boy, though once or twice as a very young child he appeared on the stage, notably when he was carried on by Edmund Kean in *Rolla*; and when he appeared as the child in *The Stranger*. Very many years afterwards his own good memory, aided by what he had heard from his father, enabled him to write for his friend B. W. Procter (Barry Cornwall), some interesting recollections of Edmund Kean's early acting days under the Sheerness manager. These recollections are given in Procter's life of the great tragedian, but may well find a place here, as they deal with Samuel Jerrold's theatre during the childhood of Douglas :

“Mr. Kean joined the Sheerness Company on Easter Monday, 1804. He was then still in boy's costume.¹ He opened in *George Barnwell* and *Harlequin* in a pantomime. His salary was fifteen shillings per week. He then went under the name of Carey. He continued to play the whole round of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, interlude and pantomime, until the close of the season. His comedy was very successful. In *Watty Cockney* and *Risk*, and in the song ‘Unfortunate Miss Bailey,’ he made a great impression upon the tasteful critics of Sheerness. On leaving the place,

¹ Kean was then in his seventeenth year. Later authorities put his first appearance at Sheerness as one year earlier, but according to a chronicler of the 'twenties, “In the year 1805 we find him playing every line at Sheerness.”

he went to Ireland, and from Ireland to Mrs. Baker's company at Rochester. It was about this time (as I have heard my father say, who had it from Kean himself), that Mr. Kean, being without money to pay the toll of a ferry, tied his wardrobe in his pocket-handkerchief, and swam the river.

“ In 1807 Mr. Kean again appeared at Sheerness : salary, one guinea per week. He opened in *Alexander the Great*. An officer in one of the stage boxes annoyed him by frequently exclaiming ‘ Alexander the Little ! ’ At length, making use of his (even then) impressive and peculiar powers, Mr. Kean folded his arms, approached the intruder, who again sneeringly repeated : ‘ Alexander the Little ! ’ and with a vehemence of manner and a glaring look that appalled the offender, retorted, ‘ Yes—with a *great* soul ! ’ In the farce of the *Young Hussar* which followed, one of the actresses fainted in consequence of the powerful acting of Mr. Kean. He continued at that time, and even in such a place, to increase in favour, and was very generally followed when, at the commencement of 1808, in consequence of some misunderstanding with one of the townspeople, he was compelled to seek the protection of a magistrate from a pressgang employed to take him. Having played four nights, the extent of time guaranteed by the magistrate (Mr. Shrove of Queensborough), Mr. Kean made his escape with some difficulty on board the Chatham boat, having lain *perdu* in various places until a nocturnal hour of sailing.

“ The models of the tricks for the pantomime of *Mother Goose*, as played at Sheerness, were made by Mr. Kean, out of matches, pins and paper. He also furnished a programme of business, and notes, showing how many of the difficulties might be avoided for so small an establishment as that of Sheerness. In allusion to the trick of ‘ An odd fish,’ in particular, he

writes, ' If you do not think it worth while to go to the expense of a dress, if the Harlequin be clever, he may jump into the sea to recover the egg.' "

Towards the close of the year 1813—his half-brother Charles was already in the Navy, having presumably run away and become a sailor—young Jerrold's ambition for a " life on the ocean wave " seemed in a fair way towards realization. On the 22nd of December in that year he was entered as a " first-class volunteer " on board the *Namur*, His Majesty's guardship at the Nore, a vessel which, as I gather from its log, was as often to be seen anchored in Sheerness Harbour as actually at the Nore. Captain (afterwards Admiral) Charles J. Austen, a brother of Jane Austen the novelist, the commander of the *Namur*, to whom indeed it is said that Douglas owed his commission, was a kindly disposed and indulgent officer, who allowed the boy to keep pigeons on board and, more significant privilege, permitted him the run of such books as his necessarily limited library contained. It was in the captain's cabin on the *Namur* that Jerrold came upon the fascinating volumes of Buffon's *Natural History*, and devoured them with enthusiastic avidity, and to such good purpose that the work always remained with him in memory, and when he came to be a writer provided him with many happy similes and quaint illustrations. That which must have made the guardship yet more homely to the small boy than the keeping of pets and the run of a library, was that the captain's

wife and two children also lived on board with him, as we learn from the very interesting volume on *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, published a few years ago.¹ Captain Austen, whose children must have been very young, for he married in 1807, was a kindly, affectionate man, by whom it may well be believed that his boy-midshipmen would be treated considerately.

There was another lad aboard the *Namur* who was destined to win fame other than that which comes to the successful seaman. This was foremastman Clarkson Stanfield, who had earlier run away to sea on a merchant ship, but had in 1812 been made a victim of a pressgang. Young Jerrold, Stanfield and some kindred spirits were wont to relieve the tedium of life aboard the guardship by getting up private theatricals, Stanfield's early leaning towards art making him an invaluable assistant in improvising and arranging scenery.

The library in Captain Austen's cabin was of necessity small, and the eager, youthful reader soon devoured all that he could find congenial there; the keeping of pet pigeons could not provide a permanent interest, and even occasional private theatricals could but in part relieve the dulness of life on the guardship. In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that the boy looked longingly forward to something more stirring than he had as yet

¹ *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, by J. H. Hubback and Edith C. Hubback.

experienced of naval life. Captain Austen had been succeeded by a Captain James Richards for a single month, and he by Captain George McKinley for nearly five months; when, on April 24, 1815, Douglas Jerrold was transferred with a company of forty-four men to His Majesty's gun-brig *Earnest* "in lieu of the same number drafted to the *Namur*."

Napoleon had but recently escaped from Elba, to be declared "the general enemy of Europe," so that now the young naval enthusiast seemed in a fair way to experience some of that action of which it may be supposed in his boyish fancy he dreamed. The *Earnest* was required at first, however, for the useful though not showy work of conveying transports and military stores to Ostend, men and materials to be heard of again, before many weeks had passed, on the field of Waterloo. Within two months of Jerrold's transfer from the guardship the great battle had been fought, and the *Earnest* may have carried some of the men from the front when in the Downs she transhipped from H.M.S. *Nymph* an ensign, forty-seven invalided soldiers, five women and two children, and took them home to Sheerness. It is said that in the cockpit of the brig the boy-sailor, keenly sensitive and imaginative, saw and heard enough of the horrors of war to influence him for the whole of his life. He was brought in close contact with the ghastly reality, apart from the excitement either of the action itself or of the

reception of the victors, and the resultant loathing for military "glory" was an ever-abiding one with him. Possibly the vessel brought back wounded when she returned from Cuxhaven on June 29, and from the Ems in August, but her log has no mention of such.

While on one of these trips between England and the Continent—probably at Ostend—young Jerrold fell into sad disgrace with his chief officer.¹ He had gone ashore with the captain, and was left in charge of the boat. While the commander was absent one of the seamen asked permission to land, and make some small purchases. The good-natured and unsuspecting young officer at once assented, adding with boyish readiness, "By the way, you may as well buy me some apples and a few pears."

"All right, sir," as readily replied the man, and promptly departed.

The captain presently returned to the boat, and still the sailor was away on his errand. A search was at once instituted, but to no purpose, the man had effectually succeeded in deserting, and the captain's blame fell, of course, on the too-lenient midshipman. The episode made a very deep impression upon the young delinquent, and years afterwards he is

¹ This incident has hitherto been told as of two deserters, and as having taken place at Cuxhaven. The Muster Books of the brig, which I have examined in the Public Record Office, only tell of three seamen deserting during Jerrold's service on her, two at Sheerness and one, on June 12, 1815, at Ostend.

described as talking about it with that curious excitement which lit up his face when he spoke of anything that he had felt strongly. He remembered even the features of the deserter, as he had, long afterwards, and in a most unexpected manner, an opportunity of proving.

With the overthrow of Napoleon, the war which had so long convulsed Europe came to an end; ship after ship that had been manned and pressed into the service returned to port and was paid off, and at length came the turn of the *Earnest*. On September 30 the commander had entered in his log "received orders to proceed to Deptford to be paid off"; and three weeks later "at 11.30 sent the ship's company to Dockyard to be paid off." Thus on the 21st of October—the tenth anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar—Douglas Jerrold stepped ashore and turned his back upon the Navy. Henceforward he must seek some other field in which to win those laurels to which all high-spirited youths look forward as the assured reward of all their strivings. He brought ashore with him, as has been suggested, indelible impressions of the horrible reality on which military glory is based, but though Nelson's profession was closed to him, he brought with him, too, an abiding love of the salt water, a lasting sympathy for those who go down to the sea in ships. Though he had not yet completed his thirteenth year, it is not fanciful to believe in the permanency of the impressions

that the boy had received—nearly forty years of the man's work were to testify to their strength.

Precisely what was the status of a "first-class volunteer" I cannot say, but such was Douglas Jerrold's position during the year and ten months which he passed in the Navy. The Muster Books give firstly the ship's company—including always as No. 1 that fictional "widow's man" whose pay and prize money went to Greenwich Hospital—the officers from admiral to midshipmen, the warrant officers and seamen. Then came the rolls of marines, supernumeraries, etc., including "first-class volunteers." In the case of the *Earnest*, Douglas Jerrold was the only one in the last category, his name and service particulars forming a rivulet of writing across the "meadow of margin" provided by two of the expansive sheets of the Muster Books.

In the summer of 1813, the year in which Douglas entered the Navy, Samuel Jerrold had handed over the management of the Sheerness theatre to his eldest son Robert, and apparently contented himself with the management of the Southend house. It would seem as though the apathy of the Southend visitors and inhabitants towards the theatre, commented on by the writer in the *Theatrical Inquisitor*, continued, for in the autumn of 1815 Samuel Jerrold found it necessary to relinquish the Southend theatre also; indeed, to give up management altogether. He had, doubtless with the war-

ranty of a series of successful seasons during the naval activity at Sheerness, had the theatre rebuilt, but the work of rebuilding is said to have been entrusted to unjust men, and the result was that the old manager found himself in difficulties, the theatre had to be sold, the home broken up, and the family to seek a new one. Thus it was that at the end of 1815, Samuel Jerrold, his wife and their children, left Sheerness for London; exchanged the surroundings of the theatre at Sheerness or Southend for lodgings in Broad Court, Drury Lane.

Little is now recoverable about those small playhouses of a hundred years ago, and therefore the following description of the Southend theatre as it appeared to a visitor as near to the time of the Jerrold's abandonment of it as 1817, may be worth recovering from the pages of an old magazine :

“ In the summer of 1817, on a month's visit to Southend, exploring the place, I stumbled on what I certainly did not expect to find, a building designated, in large letters, *Theatre Royal*, which but for this notice, I should have taken for a very small chapel or rather meeting-house. I had merely read the high-sounding words *Theatre Royal*, when the manager appeared at the door (there was but one, for box, pit, gallery and stage); I immediately recognised an old acquaintance, who a season before had been engaged at the Haymarket Theatre. He very politely gave me the entrée of the theatre during my stay; but requested that I would delay my visit until the next

night but one of performance; as he flattered himself on *that* night there would be something worth seeing. It was the bespeak of the village of 'Prittlewell'; for which occasion they had prepared three new pieces, but more particularly *Blue Beard*; on which he told me he had bestowed much care and expense."

The writer proceeded to give a ludicrous account of the performance of *Blue Beard* to a "house"—despite the bespeak—of sixty or seventy persons, and his description suggests that owing to that lack of support with which the "visitors and inhabitants" had before been reproached, the Southend theatre had a company more worthy of its audience's neglect.

After the departure of the Jerrold family from Sheerness and Southend, we more or less lose sight of Samuel Jerrold's two sons by his first marriage. The elder, Robert, who had probably left home by the time that Douglas was born, followed his father's profession, and had become a strolling player on some other circuit. He is said to have taken as his stage name Fitzgerald—presumably at first when acting in his father's company to avoid confusion—and to have become successively manager of the Norwich and York circuit companies. With the Norwich Company he stayed for some years. He is referred to as an "old friend" in a notice of Norwich theatricals in 1806, while in 1808—

"Mr. Fitzgerald is, without exception, the most useful performer we have; he seems to undertake and

bustle through with uncommon ease, all the various parts of gentlemen, Jews, countrymen, Irishmen and sailors; his naturally hoarse voice, and rolling walk, rather unfit him for the first, but he must be thought the support of our house."

A year after, and the same critic enlarged on Robert's versatile powers, his natural genius, his forcible energy, and his knowledge of stage effect. While six years later he was still with the same company, as we learn from a note on the Norwich Company at Lynn—

"This town may boast of a company that would not disgrace the first of our metropolitan theatres. I never saw the comedy of the *Rivals*, taken as a whole, better. The Sir Lucius of Mr. Fitzgerald, I think equal, if not superior, to Mr. Johnstone: in Irishmen and sailors he is particularly happy—he has more than once been in treaty with the London managers, but at the request of his Norwich friends, where he is greatly admired as an actor, and highly respected as a man, the treaty has been broken off."

Shortly after this he must have left Norwich, for in June 1815 he was lessee of the York circuit. He died suddenly at Hull in the spring of 1818.

Charles Jerrold, as has been said, entered the Navy, became a warrant officer, and died about 1846.

The Admiralty papers which I have examined in the Public Record Office show that he must have entered the Navy as Charles Gerald—which suggests either that he had run

away to sea and given his name as spelt thus, or that finding it spelt thus on board he had allowed it to remain so. When or at what age he joined I cannot find, but in the summer of 1812 he was on a ship in Sir Edward Pellew's squadron in the Mediterranean, and was on June 1 duly certified as fitted to receive a boatswain's warrant. As boatswain he was appointed in the following month to the *Minorca*, and afterwards served in the same capacity in the *Camilla*, *Florida*, *Argus* and *Rainbow*. The last-named ship he joined in December 1823, and between then and 1827—when his name no longer appeared in the active list of boatswains—he seems to have been transferred to duties in Chatham Dockyard.

Some years ago I received a letter from an old man who said that as a boy in the early 'forties he lived at Woolwich, next door to Edward Jerrold, a retired warrant officer, and his wife, and if his memory did not err over the name, it is possible that Charles Jerrold was Charles Edward or Edward Charles. From the same correspondent I learned that this Jerrold married a Miss Barbara Punchard, daughter of a Captain Punchard, who was in command of a ship stationed at Woolwich Dockyard, and that he died some time in the 'forties.

A couple of stories of this Edward Jerrold may be given more or less closely in the words of my kindly old correspondent, who "thought he remembered hearing it said that the Jerrols were Cornish people:"

Now Douglas himself was always devoted to the sea, so Edward said, and was always, when young, pleased to get out in a sailing boat. The rougher the sea the better he liked it. I remember Edward saying they were once out together when the sea was rough, and there was a high wind. Two or three times they were nearly swamped, and while Edward steered Douglas was kept constantly baling, but at last they safely reached the shore, and Douglas said what a jolly trip they had had. When he was a sailor Edward would, when ashore, make his way to the theatre where his brother's plays were being performed, and after one voyage he went to the theatre, and told some one there that he wanted to see Jerrold. The answer was, "Oh, you must mean Fitzgerald." "Fitzgerald be damned, my brother Douglas never had Fits," said the sailor, and made his way past to some one who happened to know the name of the writer of the play being performed, as well as that of the performers.

The other story tells how the sailor went to see one of his brother's pieces performed, and sat in the pit. Hearing some loud laughter and noisy talk in the gallery, he looked up and saw some of his shipmates there, evidently having a jolly time together. This was too much for him, and shouting "Ship ahoy!" he jumped up, and climbed by various projections past two tiers of boxes, sailor fashion, "with his bottle in his side jacket pocket, as easy as

though mounting the rigging, and with the ready help of his mates from above. No damage was done, though the people were expecting every moment to see him fall, and the incident passed off as a sailor's freak. In one of the boxes which he passed sat a young woman with her friends who were acquainted with Douglas Jerrold, to whom the circumstance was afterwards mentioned, when they learned that the climbing sailor was his brother. The young woman was Barbara Punchard, who afterwards became Mrs. Edward Jerrold.

So runs my correspondent's strange story.

CHAPTER II

THE PRINTING-HOUSE—FIRST PLAYS AND MARRIAGE

1816—1824

A FELLOW actor many years later said that Samuel Jerrold was the only really honest manager that he had ever known, but notwithstanding—cynicism might suggest because of—the character indicated by that testimony he had to give up his theatres as a failure, and retire on London, the goal of the hopeful and the hopeless alike. It was on the last day of 1815 that the family left their old home by the Chatham boat, and on the first day of 1816, in the early morning, they landed in London, and settled down in a house in Broad Court, Drury Lane—some years since entirely transmogrified. Mrs. Samuel Jerrold and her two daughters were on the stage—and on coming to London it may well be that they sought engagements at one or another of the metropolitan playhouses—probably at one of those “minor theatres,” of which the contemporary press affords but the scippiest details. Not for the first few years of their stay in London have I been able to trace their appearance in the playbills of the period,

though in 1822 Miss Jerrold was acting at Sadler's Wells, and shortly before, and for many years after, Mrs. Samuel Jerrold was in the company at the English Opera House.

A curious feature in the history of the theatre during the early part of the nineteenth century is the association of the stage with the work of the printer. Samuel Jerrold, as we have seen, was at one time printer to the theatrical company to which he belonged; William Oxberry, a comedian of considerable note at the time, had been apprenticed to a printer, who was also something of an actor, and himself got his indentures cancelled that he might go on the stage. Samuel Phelps began as a printers' reader on a Plymouth journal, and continued the same work in London before finally reaching the stage. Samuel Jerrold's slight association with the craft as theatrical printer may have suggested the putting of the two sons of his second marriage to the trade, rather than to the stage, which had in his own case left him stranded in old age. Possibly, too, it may have been realized that most of the actors of the time had started as something else, and been afterwards impelled to the stage. Anyway, now or later, Henry Jerrold—whose story is of the vaguest, though his name crops up now and again—became a printer; and shortly after the family reached London, Douglas, then in his fourteenth year, was bound apprentice to one, Sidney, a printer in Northumberland Street,

Strand—a street which, entirely rebuilt, remains to the west of Charing Cross railway station. The exact date of the apprenticeship I have not been able to determine, but it was probably soon after the removal of the Jerrolds to London, for it was evidently necessary that all should combine to maintain the household, the head of which had apparently reached the end of his working days.

To a boy in his early teens the change from Sheerness to Broad Court was probably little hardship; certainly not at first, when London had yet the glamour of novelty. He must have heard much of the London theatres—of the grand “patent” houses and their companies—from actor-visitors to the Sheppey theatre, and as his father’s son he would probably have little difficulty in getting occasional “orders” to see the performances. He was early to learn that it was necessary to be quick-witted in his new surroundings, for a story runs that a few days after his arrival—before the naval uniform had been finally laid aside—he went to Scot’s Theatre (later the Adelphi), which is said to have had a “remarkably amusing pantomime” at this time, and as he was walking up the passage was stopped by an imperative “Pay here, please!” Unsuspectingly he handed over his coin and passed on, to be met again with a peremptory “Pay here, please!” as he reached the genuine pay-office. Only then did he learn that he had been victimized by a sharper.

Having no more money, he was turning disappointedly away, when a gentleman who had learned of his trouble generously paid for him.

Shortly after the Jerrols removed to London, Wilkinson, the actor who after making a start at Cranbrook had been a member of the Sheerness company, and had given Douglas some of his first lessons, returned to London to become member of the company at the Theatre Royal English Opera—later to be known honourably in the annals of the stage as the Lyceum.

Wilkinson—old playbills and dramatic critics troubled little about the Christian names of the actors, perhaps as “rogues and vagabonds” they were regarded as without the pale—was a Londoner, born in 1787, who had made his first appearance on Samuel Jerrold’s Cranbrook stage as Valverde in *Pizarro*. Later he was at Sheerness, thence passed on to Southend, and for a time was in Scotland as a member of Henry Siddons’s Edinburgh company. Coming south again, he was at the Theatre Royal at Norwich for three years, and on June 15, 1816—a few months after the arrival of his friends the Jerrols in London—made his first appearance before a metropolitan audience at the English Opera House, where he continued for some years as principal comedian. Though described as “one of the best low comedians of the day,” it is not easy to find much about him, but one colleague said of him, “he is another who may be held

up as an example of what actors ought to be—upright, honourable and honest in all his dealings, a warm friend, and an excellent husband and father.”¹

Wilkinson visited the new home in Broad Court, and more than forty years later he said: “I cannot forget how glad Douglas was to see me, and how sanguine he was of my success, saying (it is now as fresh in my memory as at the time he uttered it), ‘Oh, Mr. Wilkinson, you are sure to succeed, and I’ll write a piece for you.’” The old actor added, on recalling the incident, “I gave him credit for his warm and kind feeling, but doubted his capacity to fulfil his promise.” This remark suggests that Wilkinson had not noticed any particular precocity about his child-pupil of some years earlier. Already it would seem the boy, brought up in the theatre, was thinking of the stage, but from a new point of view; already he was feeling himself moved to express himself by means of the pen. Therefore, it may well have seemed that apprenticeship to a printer was one of the ways which might take him to the desired goal. At least, in a printing-house he was in the atmosphere of literature; as compositor he would have to set the type for other men’s books, would have opportunities for reading, for learning how it was that his contemporaries were expressing themselves in those years when, international unrest

¹ *Theatrical Biography*, by Francis Courtney Wemyss. 1848.

having come to an end after the battle of Waterloo, social and political unrest were changing England. Old ideas were giving way to new ones; intolerance, fighting hard the while, was opposing the tolerance which a decade later was to admit Roman Catholics to the rights of citizenship; some outspoken writers—Cobbett, Leigh Hunt, Henry Hunt and others—had begun to speak for democracy, and though punishment fell on them at times for their outspokenness, their words were having an effect in widening the cry for reform. “Bliss was it in that time to be alive, but to be young was very heaven,” said Wordsworth of an earlier period. Looking back on the great change wrought during the two short reigns between the death of George III and the accession of Victoria, the words seem again not inapplicable; for the two brief reigns that came between the long ones of George III and Victoria mark changes alike in the moral, intellectual and physical worlds.

Already in the 'twenties the spirit of change was abroad, the eager youth may well have felt it “in the air,” as we say. The awakening of something of a political sense in the people was making the cry for reform more insistent, was widening the recognition of the mediævalism of the spirit which debarred Roman Catholics from rights of citizenship; the new spirit in poetry, expressed through the voices of Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge, became yet more lyrical in the voices of Keats and

Shelley. It was a time of the questioning of old ideas, the formulating of new ideals. The focal point of such changes is of necessity seen in literature and the press, and it is small wonder that an eager-minded young student who found his daily work in setting the type by means of which the thoughts of others were given to the world, should think whether he, too, had not something to utter. Douglas Jerrold appears, indeed, to have been early inspired with the desire to write, though he must have felt there was much educational leeway to be made up before the desire could be achieved, and have sternly resolved that he would in his spare hours make up for lost time. Despite a twelve-hours day at the printing-works he managed by early rising and late retiring to find hours for the mastering of Latin, French and Italian, and for the reading of those great and varied books, a knowledge of which is in itself a liberal education. Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott were early idols, the latter still veiled in the anonymity of "the author of *Waverley*." Scott was then at one and the same time delighting the reading world and extending its boundaries, and in after years Jerrold would tell how he had borrowed the volumes one by one from a lending library and read them delightedly to his father.

Long hours of work and time given to self-training did not, however, prevent the youth

from trying his hand at literary expression, and he doubtless made early essays in the periodical publications of the period; but those first attempts are no longer traceable, and perhaps not to be regretted, for, as he put it in one of the rare directly autobiographical passages in his later writings, "self-helped and self-guided, I began the world at an age when, as a general rule, boys have not laid down their primers; the cockpit of a man-of-war was at thirteen exchanged for the struggle of London; appearing in print ere perhaps the meaning of words was duly mastered—no one can be more alive than myself to the worthlessness of such early mutterings."

Little can be recalled of Douglas Jerrold's apprentice days, but the following story may be given. When the lad brought home his first earnings he and his father were alone, and they decided to celebrate the auspicious event in a fitting manner. Douglas would himself tell with great glee in later years how he went forth with his *own* money to buy a dinner. A beefsteak pie was the dish decided upon, and the materials having been bought, the question arose as to how they were to be so combined that the result would be a veritable pie? The youthful printer's apprentice was not one to be daunted by such a problem, and immediately set to work, and having completed his culinary task, took the pie to the bakehouse. He continued his journey to the circulating library and borrowed the latest of the novels

of the mysterious "author of *Waverley*," and returned with it to read the fascinating pages to his father. The recollection of this day ever remained vividly in Jerrold's memory, and when telling the story he would add emphatically and with justifiable pride, "Yes, I earned the pie, I made the pie, I took it to the bakehouse, I fetched it home; and my father said, 'Really the boy made the crust remarkably well.'"

Jerrold was only in his sixteenth year when the promise made to Wilkinson was fulfilled, and he had a piece duly written for that actor. Its curious fate may best be given in Wilkinson's own words:

"In 1818 (his fifteenth year¹), I presume he wrote his first piece. It was sent in to Mr. Arnold of the English Opera House, and it remained in the theatre for two years. It was probably never read. After some difficulty he got it back. In the year 1821 Mr. Egerton of Covent Garden Theatre, becoming manager of Sadler's Wells Theatre, and I having a short time to spare between the closing of the Adelphi and the opening of the Lyceum, he wished me to engage with him for a few weeks, which I did, but on condition of his purchasing the farce which had been returned from the English Opera House, and producing it on the first night of my engagement, giving me the character intended for me. The original title of the piece was *The Duellists*—a weak title I thought for Sadler's Wells; so I rechristened it, calling it *More Frightened Than Hurt*. It was performed for the first time on Monday, April 30,

¹ Should be sixteenth.

1821, in its author's eighteenth¹ year. It was highly successful, and, however meanly the author may have thought of it in after days, it had merit enough to be translated and acted on the French stage; Mr. Kenney being in Paris, saw it played there, and not knowing its history, thought it worth his while to retranslate it; and he actually brought it out at Madame Vestris's Olympic Theatre under the name of *Fighting by Proxy*, Mr. Liston sustaining the part originally performed by me."

This performance, however, was not until 1821, and about 1819, owing to the failure of his employer, Douglas Jerrold had been transferred from the printing office in Northumberland Street to the one in Lombard Street from which was issued the *Sunday Monitor*. For a short time, too, he is said to have been printers' reader at Messrs. Cox & Wyman's printing office in Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn, possibly after leaving the *Sunday Monitor*.

While he was a youth of about sixteen Douglas Jerrold left his father's home for a brief time, thinking perhaps by living alone to have a prouder feeling of independence. The experiment was, however, soon given up, and he returned to his parents' house, and continued that severe routine of self-improvement which he had resolutely marked out for himself. Early in 1820, either the day before or the day after the death of George III (on January 29), Samuel Jerrold died, and somewhere about this time the family re-

¹ Should be nineteenth.

moved to a new home in Little Queen Street, Holborn—the street in which Charles Lamb had lived through his tragedy a quarter of a century earlier.

Very little more than a year after the death of the old actor-manager, his son was for the first time to taste of the sweets of popular applause on the production of his earliest dramatic venture. *The Duellists* had at length been recovered from the English Opera House, and the Jerrolds' very good friend Wilkinson was about to fulfil a short engagement at Sadler's Wells Theatre. The actor, as we have already seen, made it an article in his agreement that his boy friend's farcical comedy—renamed *More Frightened Than Hurt*—should be produced and that he should be cast for the part specially written for him. The piece was duly presented to the public on the last day of April and enjoyed considerable success, including, as has been seen, the double compliment of translation into French and retranslation into English.

The story of the play is distinctly comical, and the action and dialogue both partake more of the nature of "screaming farce" than of that pure comedy with which Jerrold afterwards became more notably associated. There are but seven characters. One, Easy by name, a gentleman at Cambridge, father of two girls of marriageable age, has invited to his place the son of a London butcher and a swaggering soldier who has never seen action, thinking

that in them he may find fitting mates for Matilda and Maria. The girls, however, think otherwise, for they have already chosen their future husbands, and, of course, in the end they get their own way. The fun is mainly got out of the two unsatisfactory suitors, each of whom is led to believe that he is responsible for the murder of the other. Although the piece is farcical and abounds in blunt badinage, yet there are not wanting strokes of that wit which was to be manifested by the author during his maturer years.

Says the swaggering Hector to the young butcher, who has twitted him for being a lieutenant on half-pay, "Half-pay! I know you to be a calf-killing rascal!"

"Don't put yourself in my hands, then," is the immediate retort.

"Who's afraid?" says Popeseye, who has threatened him, at the same time doubling up his fists.

"No, sir," says Hector, "I have a sword at my side."

"And it seems you'll keep it there," readily answers the butcher, who appears to have a wit as sharp as his knife.

Yet once more, when the soldier is threatened with a duel, he betrays his true cowardice; his would-be second remonstrates with him, saying, "Being a soldier, I should have thought you would have been prepared."

"Not at all! We more frequently draw upon the banker than the foe."

Again, when his prospective father-in-law says, "You have partaken of the vices of the army as well as its glories."

Hector replies, "The vices, sir, no. I have them all—under my command. My friend Popeseye was speaking of danger; it's in that I have had experience. Since you force me to publish my valour, learn, sir, that I have had the honour of galloping through columns of fire, warding off cannon-balls with my elbows, then swam through a river to the enemy's fort, forced the pass, mounted the battery, spiked the guns, and waded back to my general with the colours in my mouth, and foreign princes' heads upon a string like a row of beads!" This might well have inspired some of the "tremendous adventures" of Major Gahagan, which Thackeray was to record a good many years later.

Of Wilkinson's performance, in the part of the butcher, with which the youthful author had "fitted" him, an admiring critic said: "Mr. Wilkinson, of the English Opera, than whom—

"a merrier man
Within the limits of becoming mirth
We never spend an hour's talk withal,"

has appeared in the character of Popeseye in a burletta entitled *More Frightened Than Hurt*, with the highest comic effect."

The success of *More Frightened Than Hurt* must have been highly gratifying to the young author, for it was such that he was early

permitted to follow it with another attempt, and in July there was produced *The Chieftain's Oath, or the Rival Clans*, described by a contemporary critic in a way that suggests that it was mainly spectacular. "A splendid piece has been produced under the title of *The Chieftain's Oath, or the Rival Clans*, founded on the old melodrama of *Oscar and Malvinia*, in which the whole strength of the company exerted themselves to the highest degree. . . . Mr. Phillips as Glenall was very effective, and the Maclean and Campbell was a highly finished performance. G. Smith sung a battle song in excellent style, and Keeley was truly comic in *Rundy Ramble*: Miss E. Scott sustained the part of Matilda with much feeling. Elliott as Dalkeith, and Hartland as Donald, both played with their usual ability. The scenery by Greenwood is of the most magnificent description. The last scene, a spacious lake of real water and the destruction of Maclean's camp by fire, was grand in the extreme."

About a month later, and another play of Douglas Jerrold's was produced at Sadler's Wells. This time it was the "*Gipsey of Derncleugh*, a melodrama in three acts adapted to stage representation from the novel of Guy Mannering." A strange feature of the drama of those days was that as soon as a piece caught on at one theatre its subject was promptly taken as a theme by the dramatist-of-all-work at another playhouse, leading to

a duplication of titles somewhat confusing to the historian. The successive triumphs of the Wizard of the North made him a fruitful provider of materials for the playwrights, and one or more versions of Guy Mannering were already staged (there had been one at Covent Garden—a musical play by Daniel Terry—in 1816) when it was evidently suggested that Jerrold should turn his hand to the same theme. There was certainly already *The Witch of Derncleugh* at the English Opera House—in which piece Mrs. Samuel Jerrold probably acted—when Jerrold duly followed with the *Gipsy of Derncleugh* at Sadler's Wells, to be followed in his turn by *Dick Hatteraick, the Dutch Smuggler, or the Gipsy of Derncleugh* at the Coburg.

It was a strange state of copyright which permitted such things, but a young man of eighteen may have been well content to take the law as he found it and to turn his knowledge of Scott to such good account. The melodrama has little in it that is remarkable, and the inconsequent way in which the characters broke off their dialogue to sing songs, only slightly led up to, appears to-day somewhat ludicrous, but was then necessary as a means of evading the Act establishing the monopoly of the Patent Houses. Another amusing method of evasion had been adopted in 1813 at the Pantheon, which was only licensed for music and dancing—the dialogue of the pieces played there being accompanied “by the touch of a single note on the piano”!

Samuel Jerrold, as has been said, had died a year or so before his youngest child added to the family's association with the theatre in this new fashion; and that the old strolling player had justified the proverb which says that the rolling stone gathers no moss—in that monetary sense in which the proverb is generally interpreted—may be guessed from the fact that his widow then, or at some later date, was granted an annual pension of thirty pounds on the General Theatrical Fund. Mrs. Samuel Jerrold was probably already a member of the stock company of the Royal English Opera House—though the earliest mention of her as such that I have found was in September 1821¹—and there she continued for some years.

According to the biographers of Samuel Phelps, that great tragedian left his native Plymouth early in 1821 and journeyed to London, where he became reader successively in the printing offices of the *Globe* and the *Sun*, and where he early came in touch with Douglas Jerrold—but one year his elder. To quote Phelps's biographers: "Whilst in these

¹ The playbills that I have been able to consult show that at this theatre Mrs. Jerrold appeared in the following: the Dame in *The Miller's Maid* (melodrama), September 1821; the Cook in *Free and Easy* (comic opera), November 1822 and July 1827; Dame Bawbie in *Gordon the Gipsy* (melodrama), July 1823; a minor part in *Der Frieschutz* (opera), September 1824; Dorcas in *Rosine* (opera), July 1825; Margery in *The Spoiled Child* (farce), August 1825; the Female Friend in *Not for Me* (ballad opera), August 1828; Madame Lafonde in *The Quartette*, September 1830; and the Portress in *Raymond and Agnes, or The Bleeding Nun of Lindenburg*.

capacities he made the acquaintance of the late Douglas Jerrold and W. E. Love (polyphonist), who were both with him on these journals, and they were all three for nearly the whole of the five years the principal members of an amateur theatrical company who gave from one to three performances a week at a small private theatre in Rawstone Street, Islington.”¹ It may well be wondered how Jerrold, engaged during the day in a printing office, energetically completing his education in his spare time and turning his attention to dramatic writing as well, could have found time also for such work as is suggested by an amateur dramatic company that gave from one to three performances a week for five years. The extent of the performances may possibly have become exaggerated by memory. There were a number of such amateur companies performing at private theatres in the 'twenties, but the performances received only occasional paragraphs in the dramatic periodicals of the day, and of this particular company I have found but bare mention. It may well be that it was in these early appearances Jerrold learned something of that actor's art which he showed with considerable effect many years later as member of a more famous amateur company, though it was as writer that his name was to be associated with the stage.

¹ Should be Rawstone Street. The brief notices of such performances in the theatrical ephemera rarely name the performers.

Phelps, who seems to have joined with Jerrold in those efforts at self-improvement which were to take them far from their printing-office stools, used to tell the following story of how it was they were started on French and Latin :

“Turning round on his stool one day in the office of the newspaper where both were engaged, Douglas Jerrold said to Phelps rather abruptly—

“‘What have your godfathers and godmothers done for you?’

“‘What do you mean?’

“‘Well, what have you been taught? What do you know?’

“This led to a comparing of notes, and it turned out that neither in French nor in Latin was either of them at that moment prepared to undergo an examination. Like wise men, they set about at once redeeming the time. An old Dutch gentleman became their tutor, and they very soon made good their deficiencies in the languages named.”¹

It was while a member of this amateur company that young Samuel Phelps appeared as a “gentleman amateur” at the Olympic Theatre on the benefit of one of the actors who had been struck by his performance at the private theatre in Islington. In his age the great tragedian recalled with amusement how, having been anxious that Douglas Jerrold should see him, he was a little hurt on the following day when his friend refrained from

¹ *The Life and Life-work of Samuel Phelps.* By W. May Phelps and John Forbes-Robertson.

comment on the previous evening's performance. At length he broke out with:

"Well, what did you think of my acting? I saw you were there."

Jerrold turned leisurely round and said, "It is my very decided opinion that, if you persevere, you *may* eventually make a good Walking Gentleman, and get your five and twenty shillings a week; but you must stick to it, remember." That he was ready to laugh at his own prophecy was to be shown when they met as successful men nearly twenty years later.

The third of the trio of printing-house actors, William Edward Love, the wonderful "polyphonist," came to be a very popular entertainer on both sides of the Atlantic. He discovered his remarkable ventriloquial gift when he was a boy about ten years of age at school. As he was born in 1806, he would have been only fifteen or sixteen at the time to which Phelps refers, and was then presumably a printer's apprentice. As he is to-day but little known, the following anecdote from an old pamphlet on his performances may be given. At the age of fifteen he is said to have journeyed from London to visit a relative in Dorset and to have diversified his journey by making use of his "polyphony":

His vocal organs, which were seldom at rest, were put in motion at the expense of the guard of the mail coach, the driver thereof and several of the passengers. The vehicle having

quitted Salisbury, Love, finding his fellow-travellers taciturn and unsociable, resigned his inside seat, and mounted the box by the side of the coachman, on pretence of viewing the surrounding scenery, leaving a deaf old gentleman and his "better half" in possession of the interior of the coach. They had not proceeded far, when a voice, apparently from within, exclaimed, "Stop the coach—stop the coach—I'm taken very unwell—for mercy's sake, stop the coach!"

The horses were pulled up—the guard was on the ground, and the door of the carriage open in less than a second.

"What's wanted, sir?" says the guard, touching his hat.

"Eh, what, what?" says the deaf old gentleman, placing his acoustic trumpet to his ear.

"Are you ill, sir?" inquired his interlocutor.

"Oh! we're at Ilchester, are we? Then, d'ye hear, take my baggage to the King's Arms; you'll find a portmanteau, two band-boxes, a carpet-bag——"

"I thought," says the guard, straining his voice to the highest pitch—his vehemence imparting to his face the scarlet hue of his coat—"I thought you said 'Stop the coach.'"

"On the *top* of the coach!—Psha! nonsense!—it's in the front boot; you put it there yourself before we started. I declare these blockheads are as stupid as——"

“ You mistake altogether, sir, I—”

“ *Must you take it altogether?* Certainly ! You wouldn't leave anything behind, would you?—Zounds ! fellow, if you are not able to carry it yourself, get a porter to help you—”

The guard, whose stock of patience had by this time completely evaporated, slammed the coach door in the traveller's face ; and, cursing him for an antiquated old fool, mounted his seat, and left the lady to explain the matter to her bewildered spouse in the best manner she could. In a few minutes the voice inside was repeated, exclaiming, in still more dolorous accents than before, “ Coachman, stop—oh, I'm dying ! ”

“ Jist hold the reins a bit, sir,” said the coachman ; “ there he goes again—blow me if he isn't as mad as a March hare. It's a mortal shame to let such *kracters* loose, without somebody to take proper care on 'em, isn't it, sir ? ”

Love, having acquiesced in coachee's opinion as to the enormity of the neglect, Jehu jumped off the box ; and, on opening the door, was more than a little astounded to find the old gentleman and his rib enjoying a comfortable sleep. The man of the whip, believing, however, that his passenger was quizzing him, cut short his dreams by slapping him smartly on the shoulder—

“ Come, I say, old gem'man, this is vot I calls carrying the joke rayther too far ; vy, ve shall be an hour behind time ;—you knows

you're no more asleep than I am." (Another electrifying slap on the shoulder.)

The unhappy old gentleman, awaking in a fright, rubbing his aching limb, exclaimed, with a face of rueful length—

"Eh, what's that?—Well, coachman, what in the d—l's name *do* you want?—I declare these fellows are all as drunk as——"

"If anybody's drunk, it's yourself," says coachee, "for I'll swear you called out this very moment, 'Stop the coach!'" The outside passengers being appealed to, distinctly corroborated the coachman's assertion, and whispered their belief that the unfortunate gentleman was, assuredly, *non compos*; while he, on his part, returned the compliment, by declaring that coachman, guard and passengers, were one and all in a shameful state of intoxication!

The three young men—Love was still in his teens, and Jerrold and Phelps but little over twenty—were all to break away from the printing office on their several paths in the mid-'twenties, but while there were, as the familiar illustration puts it, "trying their wings." Douglas Jerrold, while still in his nineteenth year, had had three plays produced in rapid succession, and during the same year was to utter a protest by means of a letter to the press that is the earliest recognizable piece of his writing—other than dramatic. This was a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Monitor*, wherein he deplored the custom

which then obtained of hawking the "dying speeches" of criminals through the streets on the day of their execution. On November 21, 1821, no fewer than eight men were publicly hanged outside the Old Bailey; four of them for uttering forged five-pound notes, one for theft from a dwelling-house, one for sheep-stealing, and two for highway robbery. No sooner was the ghastly travesty of justice enacted than the streets were made hideous by the bawling of disgusting prints, purporting to be the last dying confessions of the executed malefactors. Young Jerrold wrote in this letter to the editor of the paper on which he was employed: "Amongst the many prevalent nuisances which call for a speedy redress, none, I think, are more conspicuous than the disgusting and I may say inhuman practice followed on every melancholy occasion when justice and the public welfare demand as an awful example the life of a fellow being—I advert to the custom of reading what are termed *Dying Speeches*." But few years were to pass before this custom was done away with, as also was the custom of hanging men for robbery, forgery and similar offences, and in a few more years the ghastly parade of public hanging was also to become a thing of the past. This last reform Douglas Jerrold strongly opposed, thinking that it would tend to defer the day to which he looked forward, when capital punishment itself should be abolished, and it may well be believed that such has been

its effect. The letter is interesting not only as being the first of Jerrold's identifiable contributions to the press, but as an early indication of the reforming zeal which was later to characterize his work as a journalist.

How long he continued to double the parts of writer and compositor—when he left the compositor's case entirely for the desk, cannot now be ascertained. Before he finally gave up the composing-stick he is said for a time to have acted as dramatic critic and compositor on the same journal. He was gradually working his way, but he was doing it earnestly, vigorously, stubbornly; slight pieces of prose and verse were offered to the editors of the current magazines and journals, and great was the delight when he could rush into the room at home, crying to his mother or sister, "It's in, it's in!" He was working, he was writing, and he was continuing that rigorous self-education which he began soon after the arrival in London. He was beginning, too, to make a circle of friends among young men similarly circumstanced and similarly ambitious. Two such friends have been glanced at. Another, and more important one, was Samuel Laman Blanchard, who was engaged as a printers' reader, but, like Douglas Jerrold, was dreaming of literary fame and working towards it. Blanchard, who was a year or so the younger, had started life as a clerk to a proctor in Doctors' Commons, and had had a short turn as member of a travelling theatrical company

before becoming a London proof-reader. He, too, was a contributor to some of those dramatic ephemera for which the reading public of nearly a century ago appears to have had a goodly appetite, and was already known to his friends as a writer of graceful verse. In 1823, fired with admiration for Lord Byron, he and Jerrold discussed the project of going to Greece that they might enlist themselves under the banner of the poet and fight for Greek independence. They were earnestly talking of this dream while sheltering from a shower under a Holborn doorway, when suddenly the talk was broken off by Jerrold with, "Come, Sam, if we're going to Greece we mustn't be afraid of a shower of rain." Repeating the story many years afterwards Jerrold added, "I fear the rain washed all the Greece out of us." It was probably nothing more than one of the generous dreams of youth, for neither was in a position then to make of the dream a reality.¹

Yet a further step forward was made when in 1823 Douglas Jerrold began to contribute papers to the *Mirror of the Stage* over the signature of "æ." Chief among these was a series of *Minor-ies*, which described and criticized sundry of the "stars" of the minor theatres; short sketches which contained here and there touches indicative of their writer's

¹ When Byron died in April 1824, Jerrold wrote in his volume of the poet's works—

"God, wanting fire to give a million birth
Took Byron's soul to animate their earth."

later style, as also did other of the pieces which he furnished to the same periodical over the same unassuming signature.

In June 1823, *The Smoked Miser, or the Benefit of Hanging*, a one-act farce, was brought out on the same stage as that on which Jerrold's first piece had been produced rather more than two years earlier. The new play showed distinct advance on its predecessor in point of dialogue. An old miser and his friend are scheming to get possession of the property of their ward, and wish—with that end in view—to wed her to an old confederate. She, however, has placed her affections elsewhere, upon a young man appropriately named Daring. Disguised as Giles Sowthistle, one of the tenants of Screw, the miser, Daring visits him on quarter-day and pays the rent. Before he can get a glimpse of the deeds which prove his inamorata to be already entitled to her estate, the genuine Giles comes in to make excuses for his inability to pay the rent due. Screw tells him that his brother has already been there, but Giles says that he has no brother. "And you will deny this to be your relation?" "Ees, zur, I has nobody but a sister, and he don't look like she." "Not your brother—why, he's paid your rent—what is he then?" "Paid my rent! Dang it, he *is* my brother."

Daring and his newly-made friend are turned out by Spiderlimb, the miser's starveling servant, to whom are entrusted many of the

brightest points in the dialogue. Daring is then let down a chimney in a basket to Anne, and they are just projecting flight when Screw comes to the room and they have to hide. The miser, confident that he has heard some one, goes to the fireplace, stumbles into the basket and is hauled half up the chimney, only to be released from his uncomfortable state of suspense for the required happy ending.

Spiderlimb makes frequent happy references to his employer's parsimony and meanness. The miser has remonstrated with him indignantly, "Why, you scoundrel, don't I keep you?" "I can't persuade my stomach that you do." Again, he says to a visitor, "This way, this way,—don't be afraid, you'll not run against the pantry." "You are a worthy, intelligent lad," says the miser, wishful of making special use of him, "and so—" "You give me humble merit's livery—rags," comes the uncompromising answer, showing the young author to be thus early possessed of some measure of that bitterness which is all too often referred to as his chief characteristic.

Reviewing Croly's comedy, *Pride Shall Have a Fall*, about this time in the *Mirror of the Stage*, Jerrold said, "Were we to choose our own destiny, were we capable of receiving from Providence any of its gifts, we would not say—make us rich, make us talented; but make us fortunate; luck brings everything, stupefies the rest of the world, distracts and deceives their vision, makes them believe they

are blinded by the rays of a peacock, when in fact they are nothing but the grey, dirty feathers of the owl.”

A month or so after *The Smoked Miser* had first made old Sadler's Wells ring with the merriment of delighted audiences, another play from the same author's pen was ready for the boards, and duly made its appearance on July 28. The piece was founded upon, and took its title from, Lord Byron's then just-published poem dealing with the mutiny of the "Bounty," *The Island, or Christian and His Comrades*. Seeing that in later years the playwright became familiar with one of the lordly owners of Chatsworth, it is not uninteresting to find from contemporary newspaper paragraphs that the Duke of Devonshire was on this occasion among the Sadler's Wells first-nighters. The piece was well received, and shared the boards with *The Smoked Miser* on into the middle of September. According to the critics' skimpy notices we learn that it "abounded in rapid incident and situation," that it was beautifully staged and that "the heaving of the anchor and preparing to proceed from Otaheite, had a most real effect." The opening scene represented a section of the armed ship *Bounty* so correctly that "a sailor in the gallery (where they mustered very strongly) called to one of the performers to 'go to leeward of the capstan.'" ¹

¹ *The Island* was revived at Sadler's Wells in the following year, and at the Surrey Theatre in 1825.

The *Mirror of the Stage* was published by John Duncombe, of Middle Row, Holborn, who was proprietor of *Duncombe's British Theatre*, and other theatrical publications, and evidently a man of some moment to aspiring young dramatists and artists. Jerrold seems early to have met with recognition from Duncombe, and continued to write freely for some time in the *Mirror of the Stage*, often, as has been said, over the simple "æ," sometimes over his own initials, and, probably, often anonymously. In the number for February 24, 1823, occur a set of nine six-line stanzas from his pen entitled *The Pleasures of One Chair*; verses which are neither better nor worse than aspiring youths are wont to put forth in the springtime of their lives. The following is a fair specimen stanza—

"The lip—the dear inviting guest,
 'Tis heaven sues—it must be prest
 But for religion's sake,
 Those glowing ruby gates of bliss
 Be they my beads, and I will kiss,—
 Such penance let me take."

Laman Blanchard also contributed to Duncombe's small *Mirror*, and it is recorded that one day, in the beginning of 1824, when he and Jerrold were talking in the publisher's shop, there entered a third young man who was introduced to the friends as Kenny Meadows, an artist engaged in preparing portraits of actors for Duncombe's various publi-

cations. According to Blanchard Jerrold it was then that Meadows took to the publisher his portrait of the actor Young, which duly appeared in the *Mirror of the Stage* for February 16 with accompanying verses by Laman Blanchard. This casual meeting was destined to bear fruit in long years of friendship and mutual assistance in work.

An advertisement appeared in the *Mirror of the Stage* for January 26, 1824, announcing a work of Jerrold's to appear "in the course of next week." The title is given as *The Seven Ages*, a dramatic sketch by Douglas William Jerrold, and the nature of the piece may be gathered from the following motto which is appended to the announcement—

"*Neville*. I don't think he could ever be prevailed on to produce it on the stage—

"*Vapid*. He? prevailed on! THE MANAGER you mean."

Jerrold had had no very fortunate experience of managerial treatment with his earliest ventures—his total return from four plays amounted to twenty pounds!—and this dramatic sketch was probably of a satirical nature. Beyond the announcement in the *Mirror* it has, however, so far proved impossible to trace *The Seven Ages*, or even to find whether it was ever actually published.

In May of this year a further play from Douglas Jerrold's pen was produced at Sadler's Wells Theatre, in the shape of *Bampfylde Moore Carew*, a dramatization of the story of

the notorious eighteenth-century King of the Beggars.

In the *Belle Assemblée* for 1824 there appeared three pieces of verse from Douglas Jerrold's pen; all of them perhaps attributable to the fact that the youthful dramatist and compositor—he was but just over twenty-one—was now engaged to be married. The pieces are such as many youths have penned in the same circumstances. The following lines indicate that he was no inattentive reader of the work of Thomas Moore, and show him also as early indulging in that use of “conceits,” to use an old word, which characterized much of his later writing—

“ I dreamt that young Cupid to Flora's path strayed,
 And eulled every beauty that deeked her domain;
 But no flower by lightning or canker betrayed,
 Or heartsease decaying he wove in the chain.
 The garland completed around us he flew—
 The cable of joy caught our hearts in the toil.
 He shed o'er the blossoms refreshing bright dew—
 Their tendrils entwining struck into the soil.

Methought I saw Time—on his lips sat a smile,
 And joy lit his face as he sharpened his blade;
 But Cupid still watchful, suspecting the wile,
 His cruel intention for ever delayed.
 The god in a rage seized the impious steel,
 And breathed o'er its surface a clothing of rust,
 Crying ne'er shall this garland your keenness reveal,
 But ever unite till ye touch them to dust.”

In 1824 Douglas Jerrold married Mary Ann Swann, a daughter of Thomas Swann, of

Wetherby in Yorkshire. The marriage took place at the Church of St. Giles' in the Fields, Bloomsbury, on August 15, 1824. He is said to have first seen his future wife when he was an impetuous lad of eighteen, and to have exclaimed on so seeing her, "That girl shall be my wife!" A similar story is told of William Cobbett. At the time of the marriage Douglas was but in his twenty-second year—his bride about a year younger—and so boyish in appearance that, as he would recall later, the clergyman who performed the ceremony addressed a few kind and fatherly words to him, bidding him remember the serious duty he had undertaken of providing for a young girl's welfare and that he must remember that her future happiness must henceforth depend mainly on her husband. Young as he was in years and spirits, that husband was already old in experience, and serious beyond those years on questions which do not, as a rule, much move the mind of youth. For a while the young couple continued to live, as Douglas had been living, with his mother and grandmother in Little Queen Street.

"Luck attends the downright striker," and the young compositor by trade, poet, essayist, dramatist and critic by aspiration, boldly entered upon the responsibilities of head of a family at an age when many young men are still at college. The following graceful verses were addressed to him at this time by his poet friend, Laman Blanchard—



DOUGLAS JERROLD
(From an early oil painting)

"And thou art wed ! God knows how well
 I wish thee . . .
 Thy name shall crown the register
 Of those that bless and blindly err ;
 That follow a promiscuous gleam,
 The poet-brain's romantic dream,
 And grasp yet miss the glittering bubble,
 While hope endears the specious trouble ;
 Who brave the winds when others droop,
 And fall at once, but cannot stoop . . .
 Clipped be thy wing ! thine eye, and will,
 And progress, are an eagle's still.
 For whether with song thou tendst thy flock,
 Or sling'st smooth pebbles at the giant,
 Though deeply thou endur'st the shock,
 Nor words nor wounds shall find thee pliant . . .
 A bard for whom the thinking eye
 Fills with the heart's philosophy,
 With whom high fancies, feelings mingle,
 Says ' Nothing in the world is single,'
 And he is right ; even mine is not,
 Dear J——, a solitary lot.
 But this perchance I owe to thee,
 Confirmer of my early vision."

The young poet's was not, as he said, a solitary lot, for even at the time he was engaged, if not already enrolled " in matrimony's list of cures," before he himself legally came of age, for in the *Dictionary of National Biography* Blanchard's marriage is said to have taken place in 1823.

CHAPTER III

DRAMATIST-OF-ALL-WORK

1825—1828

AN often repeated story—with a parallel in the life of Benjamin Franklin—tells us that while Douglas Jerrold was still a compositor on the *Sunday Monitor* he made his first significant beginnings as a journalist. It was at the English Opera House—where, as has been said, Mrs. Samuel Jerrold was a member of the company—that Weber's opera of *Der Freischutz* was first presented to an English audience on July 22, 1824, and, the story runs, Douglas, having been present at the performance, was so impressed by the beauty and harmony of the work that he wrote a critical paper on it and dropped it anonymously in the editorial letter-box at the office where he was engaged as compositor. When he began work the next morning great was his gratification at finding his own manuscript among the first copy handed him to set up, and greater still on finding an editorial note appended, asking for further contributions from the unknown correspondent. This it was, we are told, which led to his doubling the posts of compositor and

dramatic critic, and so to his final laying aside of the composing-stick and becoming wholly dependent on the pen.

It must be admitted that the file of the *Sunday Monitor* does not bear out the truth of this story. The notice of *Der Freischutz* which appeared in that journal does not seem to have been from Jerrold's pen, and was very evidently the work of the same critic who had written of the English Opera House in the same paper a week earlier. He may, of course, have been engaged on another paper at this time, but the traditional story proves unverifiable. In the *Sunday Monitor* of August 8 appeared a *mot* which might well have been Jerrold's—"a later critic has aptly observed in reference to the character of the music in *Der Freischutz* that the composer has not brought *airs* from heaven, but *blasts* from hell."

It was, as has been shown, assuredly far from being his first appearance in print. In 1825 both Douglas Jerrold and his friend Laman Blanchard were contributing to a small twelve-page literary miscellany—presumably issued weekly—entitled *Arliss's Literary Collections*,¹ in which were given short pieces of prose and poetry, both original and selected. Jerrold's signed pieces are four in number, slight, satiric prose scraps, but it is probable that he contri-

¹ In *The Life and Remains of Douglas Jerrold* it is said that he "first tempted the judgment of the public by bits of fugitive verse; and this in *Arliss's Magazine*," but there is no trace of anything of his in the magazine, which was doubtless confused with the later *Literary Collections*.

buted several of the short unsigned moralizings scattered throughout the little volume.

Family associations and his early stage successes combined to make him turn to dramatic writing as the means of earning an income, and his youthful successes at Sadler's Wells bore early fruit, for some time in 1825 Douglas Jerrold accepted an engagement as playwright to the Coburg Theatre at a small fixed salary. A few months earlier a critic had written that the Coburg was rapidly declining, and implied that it deserved so to do, for it offered its patrons "pieces that would disgrace a booth at Bartholomew Fair." This state of things the young dramatist of two-and-twenty was to reverse in return for the sum of four or five pounds a week,¹ paid to him by the one-time harlequin, George Bolwell Davidge, become manager of the Coburg, on the understanding that he would provide pieces, drama, farces and dramatic squibs "as frequently as they might be called for by a capricious public, and an avaricious manager." "Long runs" were then things undreamed of in the philosophy of the most optimistic of managers and only dreamed of by the callowest of playwrights, and the position was therefore far, indeed, from being a sinecure. New pieces were in almost constant demand, and the youthful author proved his remarkable

¹ In 1790 Thomas Dibdin had been similarly employed at one of the theatres, his duties being to write one-act plays as required on any local or topical subject—and a pantomime at Christmas—for five pounds per week.

fertility of invention in the readiness with which he maintained the supply; and maintained it, too, as he was justly proud of declaring, from native sources. Though but little more than a youth in years he had already resolved to wage war against the prevailing fashion of "borrowing," "adapting," or, as he would have preferred to stigmatize it, "pilfering" from the French. The most popular writers for the English stage of that day were wont to make very free use of Parisian productions, and young Douglas Jerrold's scorn of the procedure is seen in many of his early dramatic criticisms, as well as in his letters and in his more matured productions. The popular "adapters" of the day, too, Planché, Selby and others, often had the shafts of his wit directed at them on this account. His strong views were strongly expressed, and even in the earlier days of his severe apprenticeship to the craft of playwright he succeeded—setting aside pieces "ordered" on topical popular themes—in vindicating his position as above everything an original writer. And even when the themes on which his pieces were founded were dictated by managerial policy, the treatment and dialogue were always peculiarly his own.

We proceed to the story of one of these "ordered" pieces. William Hone in his *Every-Day Book* declared that nothing would stop the dramatist of the time from seizing on any novelty for stage purposes, and reproduced a handbill

that was being given about the streets in which one "Thomas Feelwell, of 104, High Holborn," stated that his own humane feelings and those of a sensitive public made it proper to expose the doings of the proprietors of the Coburg, and proceeded to set forth the following strange story :

"A young man of extraordinary leanness was, for some days, observed shuffling about the Waterloo Road, reclining against the posts and walls, apparently from excessive weakness, and earnestly gazing through the windows of the eating-houses in the neighbourhood for hours together. One of the managers of the Coburg Theatre accidentally meeting him, and being struck with his attenuated appearance, instantly seized him by the bone of his arm, and, leading him into the saloon of the theatre, made proposals that he should be produced on the stage as a source of attraction and delight for a British audience; at the same time stipulating that he should contrive to exist on half a meal a day—that he should be constantly attended by a constable, to prevent his purchasing any other sustenance, and be allowed no pocket-money, till the expiration of his engagement—that he should be nightly buried between a dozen heavy blankets, to prevent his growing lusty, and to reduce him to the lightness of a gossamer, in order that the gasping breath of the astonished audience might so *agitate* his frame, that he might be tremblingly alive to their admiration."

Seriously, if this be so it ought not to be, said Hone, and went on to suggest that the condition of the poor man should be an object

of public inquiry as well as public curiosity. It may well be that Mr. "Feelwell's" handbill was nothing but an ingenious advertisement for the Coburg. One Seurat, the "living skeleton," was on exhibition in Pall Mall, drawing crowds of the morbidly curious, and doubtless Davidge, seeking to turn that notoriety to theatrical gain, instructed his new journeyman-dramatist to make a play of which the attenuated one should be a central figure. Thus it was that *The Living Skeleton* was produced at the Coburg Theatre.¹ The success of the little piece must have been considerable, for several years afterwards Jerrold's new productions for the Coburg stage were always announced as "by the author of *The Living Skeleton*." In the circumstances it is to be regretted that the play is not now obtainable; it was commented on as follows in one of the newspapers of the day:

"An amusing piece in which Sparerib, 'a student of medicine in love and in debt,' is asked by a creditor, Sharp, to raise the wind by means of exhibiting himself as a living skeleton. Sharp observes [and the satirist is betrayed in the dramatist of two-and-twenty], 'that the public would rather give half a crown apiece to see a man without flesh than sixpence apiece to put one in good condition.' A real skeleton is substituted for Sparerib, and is seized in his name as a victim for the debtor's prison."

¹ August 15, 1825. There was another "living skeleton" in America, one Calvin Edson, who so far stultified his name as to die—at Randolph, Vermont, in October 1833.

A fortnight after the production of *The Living Skeleton* at the Coburg, Douglas Jerrold's first child, Jane Matilda, was born on August 29.¹

New pieces and dramatic sketches were brought out so frequently in the "good old days" that sometimes we find but the barest mention of them made even in periodicals devoted exclusively to matters theatrical. Especially was this the case with regard to pieces produced at the transpontine or other of the unpatented houses. The second play

¹ The following are the entries made by Douglas Jerrold himself in his copy of the "Baskett" Old Testament of 1715, acquired by him in 1837, and now in the possession of the writer, who has added in brackets the places of birth from the church register—

"Jane Matilda Jerrold, born August 29, 1825. Christened at St. George's, Bloomsbury.

William Blanchard Jerrold, born December 22, 1826. Christened at St. George's, Bloomsbury. [Little Queen Street.]

Douglas Edmund Jerrold, born July 18, 1828. Christened at St. George's, Bloomsbury. [Seymour Street, St. Pancras.]

Mary Anne Jerrold, born September 21, 1831. Christened at St. George's, Bloomsbury. [Augustus Square, Regent's Park.]

Thomas Serle Jerrold, born July 4, 1833. Christened at St. George's, Bloomsbury. [Seymour Terrace (Little Chelsea).]

Mary Anne Jerrold, born March 26, 1830. Died April 8, 1831.

Bessy Jerrold, born August 28, 1836. Died November, 1836."

An examination of the registers of St. George's, Bloomsbury, shows that Jane was not christened at that church, and that Thomas was actually christened *Charles* Serle.

to be written by Jerrold for ex-harlequin Davidge—or at least the second which is traceable as his, for the authorship of many productions seems never to have been declared—was a comic sketch entitled *London Characters*, a piece of dramatic caricature of which only the “advertisement” has proved recoverable :

“LONDON CHARACTERS

“*Puff! Puff!! Puff!!!*

“‘Puff in thy teeth.’—SHAKESPEARE.

“Some explanation may be required from the writer to preface this (apparently) hardy undertaking, and he enters on it with all the alacrity which the consciousness of good intentions is so well calculated to inspire. It is a common fault that in our anxiety to render homage to the memory of men bygone, we treat somewhat too cavalierly the illustrious living, who still pay rent and taxes: it is as though individuals were not to be esteemed until they had given employment to an undertaker. Now the present object of the writer is to awaken the public to a proper knowledge of the talents scattered through the town, to pull its million buttons and tweak its thousand noses, until the said lethargic public shall open its two thousand eyes (that is, allowing a pair for every person), and become fully assured of the greatness it has snored over. To this end and without any fear or trembling the writer creates the important letters that form the mystic name of *Francis Moore*, physician, almanac maker, the awful wizard that warns the ungrateful world of the season for umbrellas and worsted hose: he apostrophizes those

venerable sages *Day and Martin*, who, like the wise men of yore, write their immortality on imperishable leather; *Burgess*, who, with Jonah, has found a lasting fame in the bowels of a fish; *Mr. Money*, of Fleet Street, who, like Captain Parry, roves 'from pole to pole' for mutual benefit; *Charles Wright*, of the Opera Colonnade who makes us forget our troubles at the cheapest rate; *Rowland*, who drops the compassionating 'dye' on the afflictions of red hair, and puts whiskers into half mourning; *Atkinson* who trains English beauty as the Greenlanders feed their children, upon bears' grease; *Henry Hunt, Esq.*, the reformer of vitiated tastes for Turkey coffee; *Charles Wright*, whose spirits like that of the Spanish goblin dwell in a bottle; *Doctor*—but no, some kind of excellence must, like the poet's flower (and, indeed, like much genius of the present day), 'blush unseen'; *Mrs. Johnson*, whose Soothing Syrup speedily fills our mouths with bones that we may better tear flesh, shall she be forgotten? Gratitude, forbid! Do they not contribute more to human comfort than all the feats of conquerors and kings? The philosopher who said the sun was red-hot metal was a fool to *Dr. Moore*, who has thoroughly solved the doubts of mankind, showing that the moon is not green cheese, but, in fact, a moon. The brilliancy of *Day and Martin*, *Warren* and *Larnder*, will remain as long as Homer's. The Elements of Euclid are not so relishing to a fried sole as Burgess's Essence of Anchovies. The labours of Money are greater than those of Hercules, for the ancient did at length slay the hydra; but the bear of *Mr. Money* has been killed a thousand times, and stripped of its wealth of fat, and yet survives. *Charles Wright* makes us abhor the creed of Mahomet; and many a Cherokee chief who has scalped his neighbour has been immortalized

in pantomime, while *Rowland* and *Atkinson*, who have fresh-haired many a naked pate, have remained in obscurity. The epicure who fed off peacocks' brains (it is lucky he did not choose men's; at least, it would be, were he now living in some countries), is less valuable than *Henry Hunt*, who makes us full as grateful with a little corn well singed. What was Semiramis who struck off heads to the present *Mrs. Johnson* who softens our infant mouths? Are the ancients to be for ever apostrophized, and the great living to be unhonoured and unsung? No; the writer, fired with honourable zeal, has plucked a quill from the largest goose in Lincolnshire, has spread open a foolscap sheet, has soused into the ink-bottle his newly made pen, and thus registers—
THE SPIRITS OF THE AGE."

That puff-preparatory to the play was reproduced in the *London Magazine* (Charles Lamb's *London*), with a comment that makes us regret the more that the text of the play has apparently not survived in any form. After quoting what is described as the proprietor's bill of fare, the critic says: "This, it must be confessed, is approaching very close to the 'very age and body of the time'; and promises a very interesting exhibition of the great men of London. Several of these originals, which may be said to be caricatures of mankind, are well caricatured by the actors. But no one complains! We must fear that this is one other specimen of the talent of advertisers; and that all the worthies whose names are thus billed, have clubbed together to dramatize

their popularity. The piece ought to pay a duty to government.”

The piece thus characteristically prefaced by the author was very well received. The reference to the men of “bold advertisement” as the true spirits of their age was obviously suggested by William Hazlitt’s well-known volume first published in the same year. The years which have elapsed since its production have eliminated the names of some of the “spirits of the age” from their accustomed places; many of them, however, are as familiar now as they were to readers of the journals when George the Fourth was king.

After the production of that skit its author apparently remained unrepresented on the stage for some months, for it was on June 5, 1826, that his next traceable piece was produced, also at the Coburg Theatre, under the title—and nothing more of it remains—of *Popular Felons*.

One of the least pleasant parts of a writer’s connection with the “minor” theatres of ninety years ago must undoubtedly have been the having now and again to prepare a piece on a subject similar to that which was already proving attractive at one of the other houses. Thus when John Liston had been for some months drawing crowds to the Haymarket Theatre to laugh over his frequent intrusions as Paul Pry in John Poole’s play of that name, Jerrold was called upon to write a play on the same theme for the Coburg, and there on November 27, 1826, his farcical comedy of

Paul Pry was acted for the first time. Liston, an unrivalled comedian of his day, undoubtedly made the great success of Poole's piece, and the very name of the inquisitive Paul is always associated with those of Liston and Poole. So much so, indeed, that in the British Museum Catalogue there long appeared under the name of Douglas Jerrold the astounding entry—" *Paul Pry*, a comedy . . . or rather by John Poole!" And the stupid error is blindly repeated—without the slightest attempt at verification—in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The two plays are quite distinct; they both record mainly the prying and intrudings of the unmitigated bore, Paul, otherwise their *dramatis personæ* are different—the dialogues are certainly distinct. Jerrold adopted as the motto for his comedy the suggestive sentence from Lavater—"Avoid him who, from mere curiosity, asks three questions running, about a thing that cannot interest him."

Jerrold's play contains some very pointed pieces of dialogue, even the ubiquitous *Pry* varying "Hope I don't intrude," with occasional smart retorts. Part of one of the scenes between Sir Spangle Rainbow and his French valet Pommade will serve to show that the witty conversation on which the comedies written in Jerrold's maturity mainly depended for their success was also characteristic of the dramatist's work at a time when he was but little over three-and-twenty.

“*Sir Spangle.* Yes, Pommade (*using his box*), this pinch has decided it. I’ll cut his throat—he dies. I always follow two plans on great occasions—I first take a pinch of snuff to arouse my valour, and then a cigar to compose it.

Pommade. Ah, ha! So your valour begins in sneezing and ends in smoke.

Sir S. What, puppy?

Pom. M’lud, I say you tak’ de tabac—de snuff to clear your head—(*aside*)—and a ver’ great deal you must tak’ to do it.

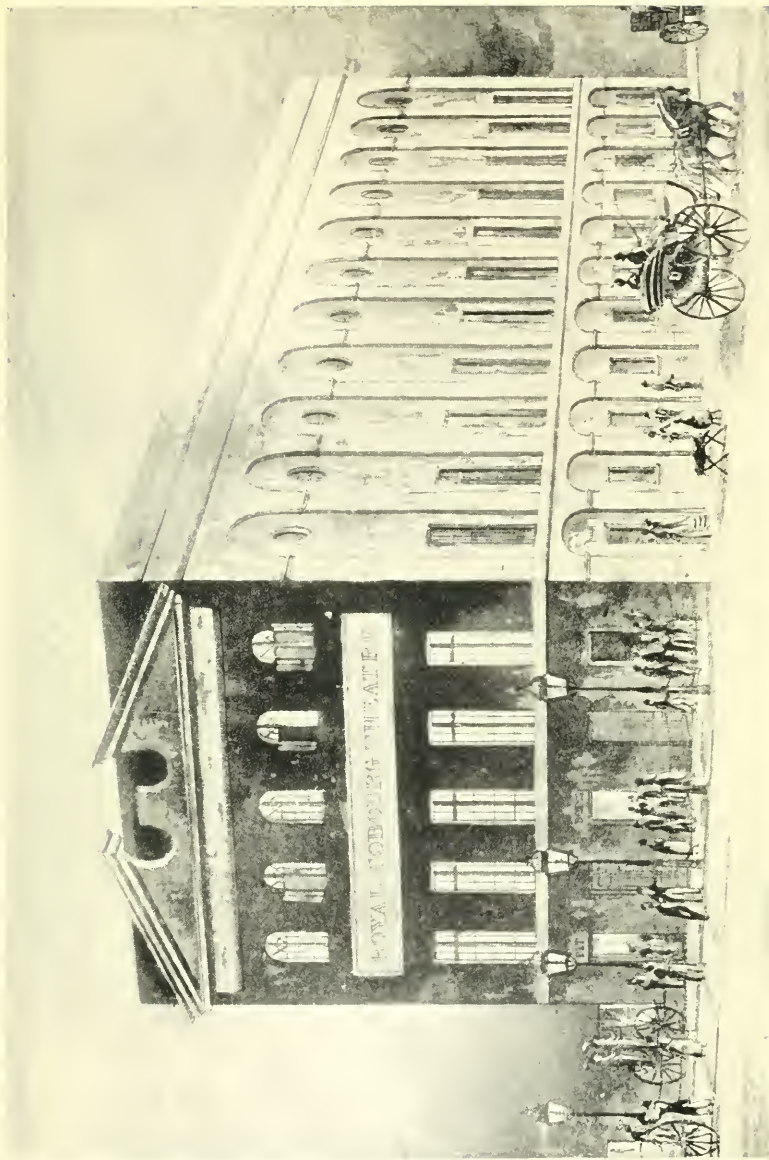
Sir S. Get me my foils, Pommade. I shall touch him with cold steel. I don’t like these unmannerly bullets; they might blow my brains out before I knew it.

Pom. Oui, my lor’—(*aside*)—but dey must find before dey blow.

Sir S. You know with the sword I’m inimitable. . . . Don’t you remember how, at the humane request of the Dowager Duchess of Duckspool, with one pass I pinned with my sword the leg of a spider against her Grace’s bureau; and don’t you remember—he, he, he!—the epigram I made on it—the—the point that was in it, Pommade—the point, you know? He, he, he, I have point.

Pom. Oh, you all point! You’d mak’ a ver’ good fingerpost.”

The supposed original of Paul Pry was an old man named Tom Hill, a friend of Theodore Hook, the Brothers Smith and other convivial men of letters. It was a standing joke among his friends always to be chaffing Hill on his great age; they pretended to look upon him as a modern Methusaleh, but no one knew how



THE COBURG THEATRE IN 1826
(From an engraving by Daniel Havel)

old he actually was. James Smith said that Hill's age could never be really ascertained, for the parish register had been destroyed in the Great Fire of London. "Pooh, pooh!" broke in Theodore Hook, "he is one of the little Hills that are spoke of as skipping in the Psalms."

As no plays from Jerrold's pen are traceable for nearly two years after the production of *Paul Pry*, it seems probable that the arrangement by which he became dramatist-in-ordinary to the Coburg did not begin until the autumn of 1828 and lasted but for a few months. In 1826 and 1827 he seems largely to have been engaged in journalism and free-lance contributions to the magazines. In the summer of the earlier year there was started the *Weekly Times*, a Sunday journal for which he undoubtedly wrote, of which he is said for some years to have been editor, and of which he is believed to have been now or a little later part proprietor. The paper begun on June 15, 1826, and in the second number *Ned Sadget* (*a Sketch of Character*) which is signed "J." is surely his, and no less surely the dramatic criticism, signed with a capital D. (for some weeks inverted D.), are his. In an early article he paid pleasant tribute to his old friend Wilkinson, whose "Geoffrey Muffincap is a statue of crystal in a niche of the Temple of Comedy." In the autumn of 1826 he contributed several pieces in prose and verse to the pages of the *Monthly Magazine*—then one

of the leading monthlies edited by Thomas Campbell—in which were appearing many of those charming sketches of village life and character which, despite her poems, and her plays at Drury Lane, are the best-remembered of Mary Russell Mitford's writings. In the September number of the *Monthly* Jerrold appears to have begun his connection with this magazine—a connection which continued for several years—with a couple of poems, one of them preceding and the other immediately following Mary Russell Mitford's sympathetic sketch of *A Quiet Gentlewoman*. The first is a fanciful piece, "Upon being asked in the course of conversation of which the limited knowledge and action of human nature formed the subject 'What I wished?'" The second is shorter, and may fittingly find a place here, as the aspirations to which it gives expression were distinctly characteristic of the writer. It is entitled *Pen and Ink: an Invocation*:

" Ye fates, that give to scribbling men,
 The drops that trickle from the pen,
 To me a precious inkstand give,
 To feed my goose-quill while I live :—
 I would not have the ebon tide
 A stream where rust and acid glide ;
 For words to trace with bitter spell
 As from Medusa's head they fell ;
 And like those drops in th' olden age,
 Turn each a serpent on the page :
 Neither weak dew-gems should my quill
 Drink till a dropsy made it ill ;

Nor would I have the honey's slime
 To toil a snake-like piece of rhyme :
 But dip my pen in some rich stream
 Where brightness, strength and beauty beam,
 And from my quill let notes be heard
 As though from some celestial bird
 Who in the skies hath left its rest
 And built within my pen a nest.

Know'st not from whence this ink can start ?
 Give me, ye fates—a Poet's Heart !
 Seek'st thou a bard ? Why, then, in sooth
 Yield to my pen—the Note of Truth ! ”

In the same magazine for the following month the ex-volunteer of the *Earnest* was represented by an enthusiastic and sympathetic sketch—the first of a series of *Full-Lengths*—of *The Greenwich Pensioner*.¹ The famous Hospital must then have numbered among its occupants men who had borne their part in Nelson's victories, so that a typical pensioner must truly have represented a “breathing volume of naval history,” and Jerrold's peroration not have sounded extravagant :

“ Who has kept our houses from being transformed into barracks, and our cabbage markets into parades ?

“ Again, and again, let it be answered—the Greenwich pensioner. Reader, if the next time you see the tar, you should perchance have with you your wife and smiling family, think that if their tenderness has never been shocked by scenes of blood and terror, you owe such gratitude to a Greenwich pensioner. Indeed, I know not if a triennial progress of the

¹ Reprinted in *The Handbook of Swindling and Other Papers*, 1891.

Greenwich establishment through the whole kingdom would not be attended with the most beneficial results—fathers would teach their little ones to lisp thanksgivings unto God that they were born in England, as reminded of their happy superiority by the withered form of every Greenwich pensioner !”

The second of the *Full-Lengths*, which appeared a month later, dealt with the *Drill Sergeant*,¹ and is interesting as one of the earliest expressions of Douglas Jerrold’s detestation of war; here, however, it is even more interesting on account of the writer’s reference to his own shortcomings in the way of stature :

“ We shrink lest he mentally has approved of us as being worthy of ball-cartridge. He glances towards our leg, and we cannot but feel that he is thinking how it will look in a black gaiter. At this moment we take courage, and, valiantly lifting off our hat, pass our luxuriant curls through our four fingers—we are petrified; for we see by his chuckle that he has already doomed our tresses to the scissors of the barrack barber. We are at once about to take to our legs, when turning round, we see something under a middle-sized man looking over our head. On this we feel our safety, and triumph in the glory of five feet one. Something must always be allowed for weakness—something for vanity; which, indeed, philosophers denominate the greatest weakness. Hence all these cogitations, foolishly attributed by the little individual to the Sergeant, arise from the Civil man’s self-conceit; the Sergeant always treating with ineffable contempt persons of a certain size.”

¹ *Handbook of Swindling and Other Papers.*

The number of the *New Monthly* which contained this limning of the drill-sergeant had, it is believed from the same pen, a pretty story of Oriental life, *The Moth with the Golden Wings*,¹ and during the following year the writer continued his presentation of *Full-Lengths*, making plain the characteristics of the tax-gatherer, the Jew slop-seller and the ship's clergyman, and also contributed further pieces of verse, from one of which, *What is Fame?* a few passages may be quoted. With the disillusionment of four-and-twenty the writer dealt with fame in a cynical, satiric strain:

“ And thou wouldst write? for what!—a name?
 Thou’rt dead, and left behind some books,
 Which, neatly bound, fill up the nooks
 Of some dull-headed plodder’s room,
 Well ponder’d o’er by—housewife’s broom;
 Or yet, less lucky, doomed to sleep
 On bookworms’ stall, with label—‘cheap’;
 And all the wit thy brain has wrought
 May, with good fortune, fetch a groat.
 Yet still thy fame neglect rebuts,
 If, midst the care of cracking nuts,
 Some fop avers he’s read the lines,
 Plucks off the shell,—then talks of wines . . .
 Yet, in a senate-house debate
 (As beetroot beautifies a plate
 Of salad for a supper course),
 Thy lines may deck a green discourse;
 Quoted in very timely season
 To save by rhyme, when lost to reason;
 Then, if thou’st been a civil beast,
 Nor gored a king, nor tost a priest,

¹ *Handbook of Swindling and Other Papers.*

Nor lived of courts and place a scorner,
Thou'lt stand in stone in Poets' Corner . . .

This, this is Fame,—to be well bound,
Sold for the sixtieth of a pound.
Now spoken of by petit-maitre,
Now lost in cry of ' wine ' and ' waiter ' ;
By peer well prized thy carved-out head,
Which, living, perhaps, had wanted bread ;
Cited to aid a new taxation,
To stuff a king, and starve a nation ;
A statue raised above thy grave,
To tell the world thou wert no knave . . .

This, this is Fame !—O flattering ill !
Bards, cut to toothpicks every quill ! ”

On December 22, 1826, Douglas Jerrold's second child and eldest son was born in Little Queen Street, and was christened William Blanchard at St. George's, Bloomsbury, one of his godfathers being Laman Blanchard. During the following year the family removed to Seymour Street, St. Pancras, and there another son, Douglas Edmund, was born July 18, 1828.

To the year 1827 is traceable one of those ready conversational witticisms on which Jerrold's fame was ultimately largely to rest. Crockford's splendid edifice of white stone had recently been completed, when Jerrold was passing one day along St. James's Street with a friend who, contrasting the new palatial building with the adjoining old houses, declared that it was " quite swanlike." " Very swanlike indeed," came the answer, " for you don't see the *black legs* working underneath."

Davidge was not, it may be easily imagined

from what his dramatist said of him, a particularly considerate employer, and numerous as are the pieces written for his stage which are distinctly traceable to Douglas Jerrold's pen it is quite possible that there is no record of the hardest part of the work—the supplying of plays that did not happen to hit the popular taste and so called for an early superseding.

On June 2, 1828, a one-act vaudeville of Jerrold's, *The Statue Lover, or Music in Marble*, was produced at Vauxhall. This was no more than it was described, a ludicrous little episode telling how a young man won a young woman's heart as himself, won her guardian-uncle by pretending to be an Italian singer—and reconciled the two by posing as a statue of Apollo. It is a slight thing, suggesting the hurried rough-and-tumble of the modern cinematograph rather than the comedy with which its author's name was to be more particularly associated. It was, however, apparently designed for the uncritical audience of Vauxhall Gardens rather than for that of the regular theatre.

Somewhere about this time there seems to have been some slight falling out of faithful friends between Jerrold and Laman Blanchard, for they were drawn together in the closest bonds, and are said to have shared such a friendship as is all too rare. The latter looked to his elder companion with something more than a brother's love and admiration. Slight misunderstandings might arise, but the affec-

tion of the two was not of a kind to be impaired by such. The impulsive outspokenness of the poet, and something of the reflected character of his friend, may be gathered from the following portions of a letter inviting the young playwright to take part in an outing to Richmond.

“DEAR DOUG., . . . I need not say, at least I think not, how much of the pleasure and profit of the ramble will depend upon your joining it. Wednesday is selected as your convenient day, and I hope you will make some little exertion to join us, if it were only to afford me an opportunity of renewing, or rather of terminating, our conversation of Sunday night, and to convince you how little excuse you have for misinterpreting my conduct when you, of all persons in the world, are the very one that should most clearly understand it. Such as my nature is, it is not too much to say that it has been almost moulded by you; and certainly, of late years, nothing has been admitted into it that has not received your stamp and sanction. It has been, and is, my pride to think and act with you on all important subjects; and for lesser matters, as they are the mere dirt that adheres to the scales of opinion, let them not turn the balance against me, nor prevent me from retaining that fair and even place in your thoughts which it is one of the best consolations of my life to believe that you have assigned me.

“If you can, independently of any occasional fit of perverse temper, conceive seriously that I do not give you credit for the many, or I should say, the numberless marks of sympathy and kindness towards me during our intercourse; or if you think I can share my mind with others as I have done with you, let

me refer you to a passage in *Childe Harold* commencing—

“ ‘ Oh, known the earliest and esteemed the *most*.’ ”

If you should wonder why I have taken the pains to write all this dry detail of feelings which we mutually recognized and appreciated long ago, it is because the conversation that occasions it has made a deeper impression than you are aware of, perhaps than you intended, and more particularly as the feeling has displayed itself in two or three less important quarters at the same time. What is only teasing in indifferent persons, is something approaching to torture when conveyed by the hand which has been so long held out in faithful and undoubting friendship, and which has never allowed the worldly pressure of calamity to weaken its grasp.

“ I shall be glad to hear from you to-night by some means. Can you call? It will be necessary to start at nine for half-past on Wednesday. Believe me ever, dear Jerrold, yours most sincerely,

“ S. L. BLANCHARD.”

Whatever may have been the temporary misunderstanding, one is almost glad it occurred, seeing the true friendly declaration which it occasioned. Of early letters to or from Douglas Jerrold this of Blanchard's appears to be the only one left, no other being obtainable until we come to the congratulations which Miss Mitford wrote on the success of *Thomas à Becket*. Wednesday being Jerrold's convenient day for an outing suggests that he was journalistically engaged most of the week—possibly on the Sunday paper to

which reference has already been made, or—for the letter is undated—later when he was acting as sub-editor of the short-lived *Ballot*.

In the autumn of this year (1828) plays from Jerrold's pen were produced at the Coburg Theatre in such rapid succession as to suggest that it was then that he began his salaried appointment to write pieces as often as they were required. On September 1 there were given two melodramas in two acts by Douglas Jerrold. One of these, entitled *Descart: the French Buccaneer*, was a romantic story of the theft by an African slave of the infant daughter of his master, a French officer, and that officer's subsequent revelation as no less a person than Descart himself. The scene is laid on a wild part of the African coast, and several savages are among the *dramatis personæ*. The dialogue of this play is more pointed than that of the one just mentioned, a certain cowardly English traveller named Luckless Tramp—the part was taken by Davidge himself—being entrusted with many of the good things. He is given to making Radical remarks, too, which sufficiently indicate the lines on which, politically speaking, Jerrold's mind was then working.

“ You see, Smouch, I have wisdom,” he says.

“ Oh, enough for a statesman.”

“ Why, as for that, a little will serve, as times go.”

And again, Tramp says that in a fight, as in a game at whist, like a well-bred gentleman, he never minds standing out, adding, “ But

seriously, as for fighting, you know, a delicate mind shrinks from observation—I'll choose the rear."

"Come, let's first go and get well victualled."

"There, I don't mind if I proceed in the van."

"Why, you cowardly dog, and won't you blush to take what you don't earn?"

"Lord bless you, not at all; if that was the case how many high noddles would redden at pay day."

The second piece produced on the same night at the same house "adapted for representation" by the same author, was *The Tower of Lochlain, or the Idiot Son*, a three-act melodrama, of no great merit, but sufficiently successful to justify its publication. A fortnight later, and another and a strongly contrasting piece was ready for the Coburg audience, when there was produced *Wives by Advertisement*, a one-act dramatic satire which showed the young writer's readiness in making effective use of the slightest materials which happened to come to hand. It was summed up at the time as a very clever hit at the prevailing fashion of matrimonial advertisements—a fashion that if no longer prevalent is also not altogether unknown at the present day.

But three weeks passed, and on October 6 there was another play ready for the Coburg boards in the form of *Ambrose Gwinnett*, a drama in three acts. The piece, which is further described as a seaside story, is based upon the

hopeless love of Grayling, a prison smith, for Lucy Fairlove, and his hatred and jealousy of his successful rival Gwinett. Circumstances favour his conspiracy to get rid of Gwinett more thoroughly than he had dared to hope; he had planned for Gwinett to be taken by a pressgang; Lucy's uncle, Collins, however, gets carried off instead and Gwinett is found guilty of murdering him and is hanged in chains, but his body mysteriously disappears from the gallows. Eighteen years elapse, and then Ambrose and Collins both return unexpectedly and all ends happily with the reuniting of the lovers and the discomfiture and death of the miserable Grayling. For those who may think there is little of probability in the story it may be said that in its essentials it is a historical one. Early in the eighteenth century one Ambrose Gwinett, a young man of Canterbury, was wrongfully accused of murdering at Deal a man who had been carried off by a pressgang, was tried, condemned, hanged, and—resuscitated! Jerrold “heightened” the interest of his drama by superadding the passions of love and jealousy. The piece brought ample receipts to the treasury of the Coburg, and in the following month was given also at Sadler's Wells. Only a week, however, had passed after its original production when a slight piece from its author's pen accompanied the seaside story at the Coburg. This was *Two Eyes Between Two*, a broad extravaganza, as it was described, in a single

act. The story on which it was based was taken from a volume presumably popular at the time, *Posthumous Papers by a Gentleman About Town*,¹ and dealt with the humorous result of two one-eyed Mussulmen gambling for their eyes, the loser not daring to look at anything as the Cadi has adjudged that he has no right to use the eye, without paying the winner for the privilege of so doing!

Next, on November 24, came a more ambitious effort in a three-act tragic drama "with a purpose," to use the phrase much used later in the century. That purpose was made plain in the very title of the play, *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life*. Welcoming it, a contemporary critic said "the author must indeed be possessed of the pen of a ready writer—for he not only produces a new melodrama or burletta at this house almost every other week, and has also, we understand, been engaged at Sadler's Wells on the same terms, but he is editor of a Sunday paper (*The Weekly Times*) beside." This three-act "domestic melodrama" has many strong passages in it, and as it is directed against a fault not peculiar to any one time, should always prove popular as a play with a purpose. One drawback to the piece is the lengthy period over which the action is carried. The drunkard, too, is the real hero, and the nobler passages are put in the mouths of the villains; Glanville, for example, the arch-villain and hypocrite,

¹ This work was by Cornelius Webbe, who appears to have been an early friend of Jerrold's.

pointing to the besotted Vernon, broken in body, mind and estate, exclaims, "See, where the image of noble, ambitious, God-like man—the master of the earth, and all its being—the creature that binds the elements to his will—that tempts the billows in their wrath, and blunts the lightning—the gifted soul that would read the will of fate within the star-lettered front of heaven—see where he lies, gorged to the throat with wine! the mockery of life, the antipodes of reason."

"Still," his fellow conspirator urges, "this love of wine has been his only fault."

"Only fault! habitual intoxication is the epitome of every crime; all the vices that stain our nature germinate within it, waiting but a moment to sprout forth in pestilential rankness. When the Roman stoic sought to fix a damning stigma on his sister's seducer, he called him neither rebel, blood-shedder or villain—no, he wreaked *every odium* within one word and that was—drunkard!"

In this play occur Jerrold's often-quoted words as to Shakespearean grog: "As for the brandy 'nothing extenuate'—and the water, 'put nought in in malice!'"

By the trick of a five years' lapse between the first and second acts and a ten-year lapse between the second and third the wretched Vernon is seen passing from happy prosperity through misery and crime to a tragic close, for the "purpose" is carried logically through and leads to no conventional happy ending.

This appears to have been the last of Douglas Jerrold's pieces written for Davidge of the Coburg Theatre. We have record of ten such spread over a period of rather more than three years, and as six of these had been produced within three months it seems likely that it was but for a short period that Jerrold was salaried playwright at the Coburg. A contemporary journal already quoted said that he was engaged at Sadler's Wells on the same terms as at the Coburg, but it appears likely that it was a working arrangement between the managers of the two theatres and the dramatist, for at this period no new plays of Jerrold's are traceable as having been originally produced at Sadler's Wells. The agreement with Davidge seems to have come to an abrupt end, though not quite in the way often described. It has repeatedly been said that Jerrold quarrelled with Davidge, and with the manuscript of *Black-Eyed Susan* in his pocket at once went to Elliston and took up at the Surrey Theatre the post which he had left at the Coburg. The story is more dramatic than true. That there was a quarrel with Davidge there seems little doubt, and in a moment of bitterness the young dramatist, smarting under some special indignity at the hands of the grasping manager, exclaimed, "May he live to keep his carriage and be unable to ride in it." A wish that is said to have been painfully realized almost to the letter.

Davidge was the centre of a good story

which the late Henry Vizetelly told at length in his *Glances Back Through Seventy Years*—

“ Douglas Jerrold, who was a hack dramatist at the Coburg for several years during Davidge’s reign, had a good story which I once heard him tell at Orrin Smith’s dinner table before he used it up in his *Men of Character*,¹ respecting the manager and a certain performing pig, a former member of the Coburg company. It seems that the performances of a cleverly trained porker, known as the learned pig, were all the rage at some London exhibition, and that Davidge was seized with the idea that the introduction of an intelligent animal of the same species on the Coburg boards would attract crowded houses. A trained pig was accordingly secured from some travelling showman, and Jerrold was instructed to write the necessary piece in which the intelligent Toby might display his surprising talents. The dramatist by no means relished the idea, and raised endless objections, but Davidge was obdurate, and in the end the piece was written. The play, with the pig in the principal part, proved fairly successful, but at length the time arrived when it became necessary to withdraw it, and the question then arose, what should be done with the pig. ‘ Eat him,’ bluntly suggested Jerrold, ‘ Toby’s still young and succulent.’ ‘ Good heavens ! how can you propose such a thing ? ’ rejoined the indignant manager. ‘ To eat one’s benefactor would be the basest ingratitude—worse, indeed, than cannibalism. I couldn’t swallow a mouthful even ! ’ The dramatist, abashed by the reproof, made no reply. A few weeks afterwards Jerrold happened to call on Davidge at his private

¹ This is an error. The story appeared as “ The Manager’s Pig,” in *Cakes and Ale* (1842).

residence when the manager and his wife were dining. He was about to retire, but Mrs. Davidge pressed him to stay, coaxingly adding, 'I'm sure you'll not refuse when you know what we are to have for dinner.' Whereupon, raising a cover, she exposed to view an inviting hand of pickled pork in which a tolerable inroad had been made, remarking as she did so, 'It's a piece of your old friend Toby.' Jerrold could not conceal his surprise, and turning to Davidge exclaimed, '*Et tu, Brute!* Why, only a fortnight ago you pretended you couldn't swallow a mouthful of your benefactor.' 'No more I could, sir,' urged Davidge, solemnly, 'if the animal hadn't been salted.' "

A glance may be taken at the brief story and its attendant moral as set forth by the dramatist himself. Davidge, disguised under the name of Aristides Tinfoil, is described as intended by nature for lawn sleeves or ermined robes. He "might have preached charity sermons, till tears should have flowed and flowed again: no matter; he acted the benevolent old man to the sobs and spasms of a crowded audience. He might with singular efficacy have passed sentence of death on coiners and sheep-stealers; circumstances, however, confined his mild reproofs to scene-shifters, bill-stickers, Cupids at one shilling per night, and white muslin Graces." In his account of the interview between the dramatist and the manager Jerrold gives further indications of the character of his employer and also has a sly hit at some of the dramatic customs of the

time. We can imagine that it is the retained author and the actor-manager of the Coburg who are taking part in the dialogue :

“ The pig was no sooner a member of the company than the household author was summoned by Tinfoil, who, introducing the man of letters to the porker, shortly intimated that ‘ he must write a part for him.’

“ ‘ For a pig, sir ? ’ exclaimed the author.

“ ‘ Measure him,’ said Tinfoil, not condescending to notice the astonishment of the dramatist.

“ ‘ But, my dear sir, it is impossible that——’

“ ‘ Sir ! impossible is a word which I cannot allow in my establishment. By this time, sir, you ought to know that my will, sir, is sufficient for all things, sir—that, in a word, sir, there is a great deal of Napoleon about me, sir.’

“ We must submit that the dramatist ought not to have forgotten the last interesting circumstance, Mr. Tinfoil himself very frequently recurring to it. Indeed, it was only an hour before, that he had censured the charwoman for having squandered a whole sack of saw-dust on the hall floor when half a sack was the allotted quantity. ‘ He, Mr. Tinfoil, had said half a sack ; and the woman knew, or ought to know, there was a good deal of Napoleon about him ! ’ To return to the pig.

“ ‘ Measure him, sir,’ cried Mr. Tinfoil, the deepening tones growling through his teeth, and his finger pointing still more emphatically downwards to the pig.

“ ‘ Why,’ observed the author, ‘ if it could be measured, perhaps——’

“ ‘ If it could ! Sir,’ and Mr. Tinfoil, when at all excited trolled the monosyllable with peculiar energy—

‘ Sir, I wouldn’t give a straw for a dramatist who couldn’t measure the cholera morbus.’

“ ‘ Much may be done for an actor by measuring,’ remarked the dramatist, gradually falling into the opinion of his employer.

“ ‘ Everything, sir! Good heavens! what might I not have been, had I condescended to be measured? Human nature, sir—the divine and glorious characteristic of our common being, sir—that is the thing, sir, by heavens! sir, when I think of that great creature, Shakespeare, sir, and think that he never measured actors—no, sir——’

“ ‘ No, sir,’ acquiesced the dramatist.

“ ‘ Notwithstanding, sir, we live in other times, sir; and you must write a part for the pig, sir.’

“ ‘ Very well, sir; if he must be measured, sir, he must,’ said the author.

“ ‘ It’s a melancholy thing to be obliged to succumb to the folly of the day,’ remarked Mr. Tinfoil; ‘ and yet, sir, I could name certain people, sir, who, by heavens! sir, would not have a part to their backs, sir, if they had not been measured for it, sir. Let me see: it is now three o’clock—well, some time to-night, you’ll let me have the piece for the pig, sir.’ ”

The pig performed, as we have seen before, and—having been salted—was eaten by the manager. Jerrold was not the writer to let slip such an opportunity for sarcasm, and the last few lines of the story are distinctly characteristic.

“ Of how many applications is this casuistry of the manager susceptible?

“ ‘ When, sir,’ cried the pensioned patriot, ‘ I swore

that no power in the universal world could make me accept a favour at the hands of such men—I meant—'

"Unless salted!"

"How often is it with men's principles, as with the manager's pig; things inviolable, immutable—*unless salted!*"

As may be gathered from the above the relations of Jerrold and Davidge were not of the most cordial, and it is by no means surprising that they quarrelled and parted. The pig-play, if it was ever an actuality, is untraceable.

CHAPTER IV

“ BLACK-EYED SUSAN ”

1829—1830

It has already been said that the common story which tells us of the way in which Douglas Jerrold changed from being dramatist-to-order to Davidge at the Coburg Theatre to being dramatist-to-order at the Surrey Theatre is more dramatic than true; that the legend which tells us how Jerrold quarrelled with Davidge, and with the manuscript of *Black-Eyed Susan* in his pocket went and interviewed Elliston, and so had the play produced at the Surrey, is demonstrably inaccurate. It was in November 1828, as we have seen, that the last of the Coburg series of pieces was produced. It was not until May of the following year that *Black-Eyed Susan* was written, and June before it made its appearance at the rival house—and it was preceded there by two other of Jerrold's plays.

“ Magnificent were thy capriccios, on this globe of earth, Robert William Elliston ! ” Thus Charles Lamb apostrophized the actor-manager with whom for a time Douglas Jerrold was to be associated. Leigh Hunt

declared that Elliston was the only genius that had in his time approached to the greatness of Garrick. But by 1829 Elliston was nearing the end of a remarkable career, which cannot here be dealt with at any length. His seven years' management of Drury Lane which ended in bankruptcy in 1826—he is said to have sacrificed his own fortune of £30,000 to the interests of the proprietors—had been marked with some incidents not usual in the running of a theatre. For example, on October 26, 1824, he was summoned to the Sheriffs' Court for knocking down one of his actors, W. H. Williams. Elliston admitted the assault, apologized and expressed his willingness to pay the costs, and so the unseemly incident closed; but in May of the next year he committed another assault on Poole the dramatist, and had to pay a heavy sum in damages.¹ In the following August he suffered from an epileptic or other attack which, as his biographer put it, left him “a helpless, decrepit, tottering old man” (his years were then but fifty-one). About this time there was a fierce attack on him in Oxberry's *Dramatic Biography*, while in one of the theatrical journals appeared the following—which in these days would surely be construed as libellous—“A correspondent asks

¹ In 1812, too, during his earlier occupancy of the Surrey Theatre, he had had a row with an actor, De Camp, which had led to a meeting on Dulwich Common on September 9, and an exchange of shots.

why Dowton, Mrs. Davison, Miss Kelly and Mrs. Fitzwilliam are not at Drury?—He had better ask the sapient manager. N.B.—Sober from 12 till 2—so says report.”

Elliston's temper, his egotism and his habits, were frequently and freely touched upon in the theatrical periodicals. In 1813 (during his first occupancy of the Surrey) the following “Intelligence Extraordinary” appeared in one of these papers: “Mr. Elliston has been observed during the past month to converse for ten minutes together, without mentioning himself or the Surrey Theatre!”

The late Joseph Knight, summing him up,¹ said not unfairly, “few actors have occupied a more important place than Elliston, and few have exhibited more diversified talent or a more perplexing individuality. In the main he was an honest, well-meaning man. His weakness in the presence of temptation led him into terrible irregularities; his animal spirits and habits of intoxication combined made him the hero of the most preposterous adventures; and his assumption of dignity, and his marvellous system of puffing, cast upon one of the first of actors a reputation not far from that of a ‘charlatan.’”

It was in 1826 that Elliston's rule at Drury Lane came to an end, and he retired on that transpontine house of which he had been lessee earlier in the century, and the name of which he had changed from the

¹ In the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Royal Circus to the Surrey Theatre. On April 16, 1827, it was announced that he would shortly open the Surrey. It was just two years later that Jerrold engaged himself at a weekly salary of five pounds to write such pieces as were required as often as they were needed; and on Easter Monday (April 20), 1829, his first play was produced at the Surrey. This was a three-act drama, *John Overy, the Miser of Southwark Ferry*, the only female character in which, the Miser's daughter, was acted by Mrs. Fitzwilliam,¹ whose brother, William Robert Copeland, had somewhere about this time married Douglas Jerrold's sister Elizabeth. In this part she was described as appearing to great advantage, her acting being spirited, unaffected and deeply interesting. In characters of romance or passion she was said to be excelled by but one of her contemporaries, Fanny Kelly.

The story on which *John Overy* is founded was thus summarized by George Daniel in the remarks-introductory which he wrote for an edition of the play: One John Overy, a miser, who lived about the eleventh century, rented the ferry of Southwark, before a bridge was built across the Thames. Flattering himself that his apprentices would volunteer one fast, should a master so munificent be gathered to his fathers, he counterfeited death, and suffered himself to be laid out;

¹ Fanny Elizabeth Copeland had in 1822 married the actor Edward Fitzwilliam.

hoping by this expedient to snatch at least one scanty meal from the mouths of his cormorants. But he sadly miscalculated; for his apprentices, conceiving the death of a ravenous old miser a matter for especial rejoicing, resolved to make a night of it; in furtherance of which they stormed the cupboard, which so terrified the ferryman, that he started up from his bier, grinning ghastly horrible at their merriment; when one of the roysterers, taking the grim intruder for a ghost, struck him with the butt end of an oar, and made a ghost of him in reality! His daughter Mary wrote to her lover the glad tidings; whereupon he instantly took horse for London, but on his way thither was thrown from his steed, and killed. Mary sought consolation in a monastery, on which she bestowed the miser's gold; and the monks, to reward her piety, canonized her, built a church and gave it her name; which church, says the record, is known as St. Mary Overy to this day. "And the bricks are alive at this day to testify, therefore deny it not."

The dramatist took from the legendary story but a hint for his play. He followed the legend in making the miser's feigned death lead to death's actuality, but added a romantic love interest, and in due course a happy ending. The author was taken to task for making his miser's "passion for wealth overcome his regard for his daughter's virtue, a circumstance which, however natural

in a wretch so sordid, is better avoided on the stage." The chief merit of the play was thought to lie in its language "written in praiseworthy emulation of the old comedy," and some of the dialogue of the minor characters is distinguished by that ready-tongued liveliness which marked even the less noteworthy of its author's pieces.

Overy, in a speech of bitter satire, tells how it was that he was driven to miserliness: "I have walked the world with eyes of manhood nearly twoscore years, and what have I seen? They call me miser, hang-dog, grey-haired wolf—it pleases me they should do so;—the world! there was a time when I looked upon it with a melting eye—a throbbing heart; I painted it a garden of flowers—I found it a heap of ashes. What did I see? The weak smote down, and goaded by the strong—virtue shivering in the winds—vice swathed in ermine;—the knave's head plumed and glistening with diamonds—poor honesty shoeless and unbonneted; he, whose tongue gave utterance to his heart, shunned like a pestilence, or hunted like a beast—he, who would lick the hand of fools or hum a lie within the ear of crime, clothed with the richest—fed with the best. I saw this, and my heart grew hard, my eye sullen; I asked the cause of so much baseness, so much unmerited contempt?—I asked, what is it, that gets up these mockeries of life, dividing man against man—placing fetters on the

lowly and crowns upon the proud?—A thousand voices answered ‘Gold! gold!’ The sound sunk deeply in my heart—I brooded o’er the word;—every feeling, every sense, fell down and mutely worshipped the new-found secret: from that moment I became what I now am.”

John Overy is a hopeless miser, he sends his orphaned grandchild away rather than feed him, he takes money, hoping to make yet more, by handing over his daughter to villains, and he shams death rather than spend money (which has been given him for the purpose) on a feast to welcome his long-separated brother—and, as in the legend, that shamming of death leads to his murder by those who are attempting to steal his hoard. The story—as well as the dialogue—smacks of seventeenth-century comedy.

The success of *John Overy* must have been alike gratifying to Jerrold and to Elliston, and seemed to augur well for the connection of the former with the Surrey Theatre. The manager’s appreciation of the dramatist’s work—appreciation no doubt fostered by the help that *John Overy* had been to the Surrey treasury—is to be seen in the following extract from a letter which he wrote to T. P. Cooke, on May 19, 1829:

“I am sorry to tell you that our friend Ball’s piece proved in my mind a complete failure. Mrs. Cooke read it, and thought with me, that the part

intended for you was by no means of that description that could have placed [you] in a prominent point of view. Jerrold is now about the first piece which is to be called *Black-Eyed Susan*; or, *All in the Downs*, an admirable title, and I have strong hopes that the writing will be equally good, for I think that he is the most rising Dramatist that we have."

In that letter we have the first mention of the play that was entirely to restore the fortunes of the Surrey and of Elliston, that was to bring large sums to T. P. Cooke and to establish his lasting fame as an actor of sailor parts. A notable thing about the letter is that it shows that the title of *Black-Eyed Susan* was a happy afterthought, for Elliston had first written it as *Sweet Poll of Plymouth*; or, *All in the Downs*, then crossed out the first four words and written in the now familiar name.

Two days after Elliston had sent that letter to Cooke he produced a second play of Jerrold's in the form of a two-act farce, *Law and Lions*. The piece opens with a quarrel between Mammoth, linkman and would-be naturalist, and his wife—a Mrs. Malaprop of low life—in which the latter declares that he must get rid of his "rubbish" or she will stay with him no longer. Mammoth exclaims: "Rubbish! I must tell you, Mrs. Mammoth, that I'll keep what I like—spiders, cockchafers, black-beetles, white mice, bats, guinea-pigs, hedgehogs and butterflies—and I'll have all

stuffed, and when you die I'll have you— No, the company of a lifetime is enough for both parties." After further words, Mrs. Mammoth says indignantly, "Ignorant fellow, I leave you to your spiders and hedgehogs and museum. And now, sir, think your wife is dead." "A leaf from 'The Pleasures of Hope,'" murmurs the husband.

This couple have a poet-lodger, Epic, who has settled his bill by providing Mammoth with a monody on the death of a piebald cockchafer, a welcome to a newly-caught mermaid, a congratulatory ode on the birth of three guinea-pigs, and, as the man of animals adds to his wife, "the best bit yet—he has thrown in your epitaph as a makeweight." Epic, who is desirous of going to the Opera House masquerade, and does so by borrowing an officer's uniform which leads to a pretty tangle, says feelingly that: "A pen is very well for an amateur author, who has naught to do but spoil gilt-edge paper and make the nonsense-tracing engine a toothpick; but when poverty transforms it into a fork, it is being fed with iron, indeed."

There are many lively sallies in the dialogue, marriage being specially made the subject of satire:

"They say a parson first invented gunpowder, but I never believed it till I was married."

"Married happiness is a glass ball; folks play with it during the honeymoon, till falling,

it is shivered to pieces, and the rest of life is a wrangle as to who broke it."

"Would you break the woman's heart, sir?" "Sir, I am not a stonemason!"

"I'm determined to punish him. How would you have me proceed?" "Let him marry her by all means."

Thus it is seen that Douglas Jerrold probably left the exacting employ of Davidge before the close of 1828, did not begin his connection with the Surrey Theatre until the following Easter, and had two plays produced there before the writing of *Black-Eyed Susan* was finished; therefore the picturesque story of his quarrelling with one manager and with the manuscript play in his pocket going straight to that manager's rival is nothing more than a pleasant embroidering of facts.

In the middle of May we learn from Elliston's letter that "the most rising dramatist" was only "about" *Black-Eyed Susan*, which the manager had plainly not then seen. Rehearsal in those days of stock companies must have followed close upon completion, and production hard upon rehearsal. On Tuesday, May 19, the author was still writing it—on the following Monday fortnight it was produced.¹ Elliston appears to have been satisfied that the writing would be good, and to have announced the Easter Monday piece with a

¹ *The Harlequin* for May 30, 1829, announced: "Among the holiday novelties at the Surrey Theatre will be the dear doleful tale of *Black-Eyed Susan*."

flourish of trumpets so confident that Davidge, obviously still smarting from Jerrold's defection, promptly staged a play at his theatre with the same title—a piece, however, which was dismissed by one of the critics as not likely to benefit either the manager or the public; another added to his notice of the Surrey performance: "A play-bill war has been carried on with great acrimony between the proprietors of this theatre and those of the Coburg, on account of the latter having taken advantage of the announcement of *Black-Eyed Susan* by bringing out a piece under that name." In another of the dramatic ephemera of the hour is the following: "We perceive by a long paragraph printed in *red* in the Surrey bills, that a violent warfare has sprung up between that and the Coburg Theatre . . . the paragraph to which we allude is very cutting; but we hope no more blood will be spilt about the matter than has been used for printing this piece of stage thunder."

On the first-night bill of the play a typographical "fist" drew attention to the words: "It will perhaps be necessary to state, that this Piece has been for some weeks in preparation, and that its announcement was taken advantage of by another establishment, which, in pirating the title of *Black-Eyed Susan*, has committed a contemptible and unprincipled infringement on private property."

The curious fact is that the title was not a new one at all, having been affixed to a piece

brought out at one of the minor theatres nearly sixteen years before.¹

Endless are the stories told of Elliston, but one may well be repeated, as it arose out of this play-bill warfare over Jerrold's drama. It was recorded a few years later. During the course of the feud, Davidge had occasion to send a message to Elliston regarding some private transaction. "I come from Mr. Davidge of the Coburg Theatre," exclaimed the messenger. Elliston listened imperterbably; the words were repeated. "Davidge — Coburg Theatre — Coburg — I don't remember——" "Sir," said the messenger, "Mr. Davidge here, of the Coburg close by." "Aye, aye," replied Robert William, "very likely, it may be all as you say; I'll take your word, young man; I suppose there is such a theatre as the Coburg, and such a man as the Davidge, but this is the first time I ever heard the name of either." And striding off, the manager left

¹ This is shown by the following extract from the *Theatrical Inquisitor* for February 1813: "Sans Pareil—The performances at this little theatre still continue to attract and amuse very respectable audiences. Miss Scott's industry has produced *Black-Eyed Susan*; or, *Davy Jones' Locker*, a comic pantomime." Notice of another of Miss Scott's pieces produced at the Sans Pareil said that had the play been given at one of the patent houses it would have established her reputation as one of the leading dramatists. The present Adelphi Theatre was at one time known as Scott's, possibly the same house had been yet earlier the Sans Pareil, later to become known as Scott's Theatre, and later still as the Adelphi. It was at the Adelphi that *Black-Eyed Susan* was last staged, with William Terriss in the part of William.

the astonished message-bearer to recover his amazement as best he might.¹

It was on Whit-Monday, June 8, 1829, that *Black-Eyed Susan* made her first appearance at the Surrey Theatre. Influenced possibly by the Coburg failure, the public received the new piece, according to one account, in but a half-hearted manner.

“The audience were hot and noisy, almost throughout the evening. Now and then, in a lull, the seeds of wit intrusted by the author to the gardener (Gnatbrain) were loudly appreciated; but the early scenes of Susan’s ‘heartrending woe’ could not appease the clamour. By and bye came the clever *dénouement* when, just previously to the execution, the captain enters with a document proving William to have been discharged when he committed the offence. The attentive few applauded so loudly as to silence the noisy audience. They listened and caught up the capitally managed incident. The effect was startling and electrical. The whole audience leaped with joy and rushed into frantic enthusiasm. Such was the commencement of the career of a drama which, in theatrical phrase, has brought more money to manager and actor than any piece of its class; but to its author a sort of *sic vos non vobis* result.”

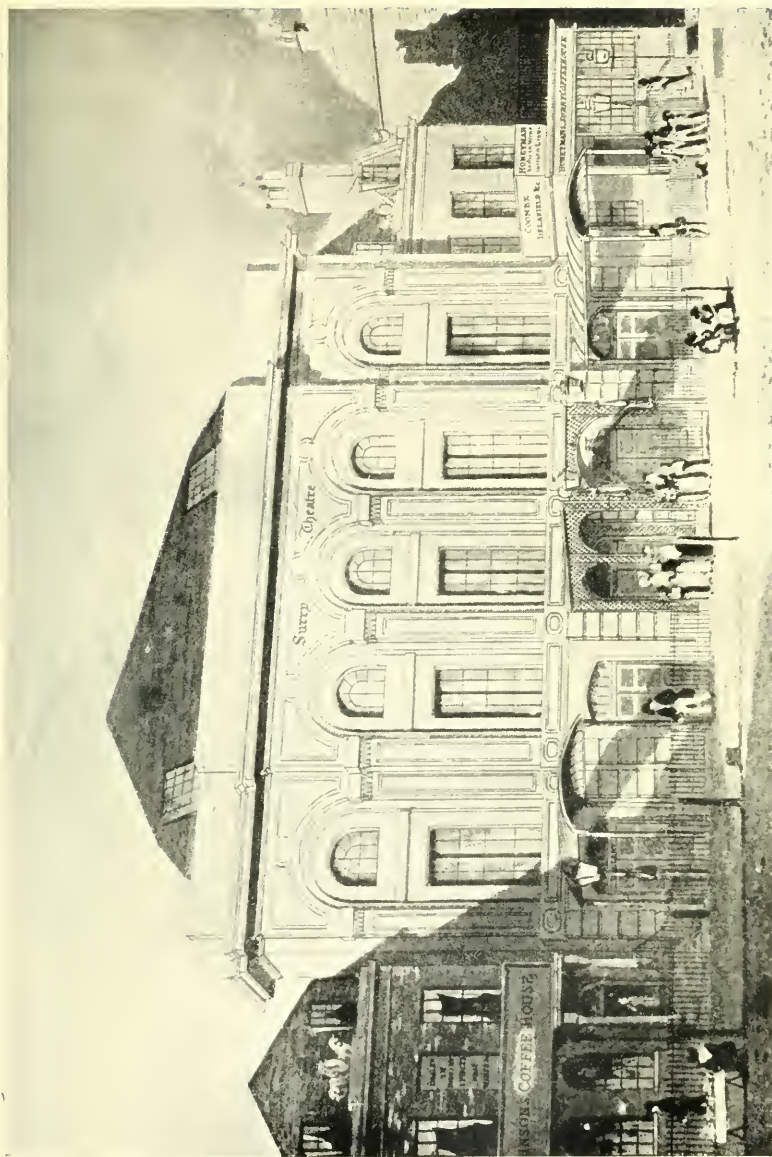
That account was written long after the event, and seems to have had something of exaggeration, judging by the brief contemporary notices of the production of the play.

¹ “Records of a Stage Veteran,” *New Monthly Magazine*, December 1835.

One of those notices, after summarizing the story, suggested that it was the parting scene between the condemned William and his distracted Susan which touched the audience so as to stamp the piece a success. T. P. Cooke, indeed, scored an instant triumph with William, his performance being described from the first as a fine, natural piece of acting, while the part of Susan was adequately sustained by Miss Scott. The novelty was but the first piece of three—a “triple bill” was at that time the rule at many of the theatres—being followed by the same author’s farce of *The Smoked Miser*, “to the great gratification of the galleries,” said one of the critics, while “the *Pilot* concluded the entertainment.”

The “bill” for the first evening was headed in bold letters, “First Night of Mr. T. P. Cooke in an entirely new nautical piece,” and went on: “Whit-Monday, June 8, 1829, and during the Week, will be presented (Never Acted) an entirely new Nautical and Domestic Melodrama (by the author of *Bampfylde Moore Carew*, *Ambrose Gwinnett*, *Law and Lions*, and *John Overy*), founded on the popular naval ballad, and entitled *Black-Eyed Susan; or, All in the Downs!*” Beneath this, an incident in the play-bill warfare with the Coburg, came the dig at Davidge, already quoted.

Owing but its title to Gay’s long-popular song, *Sweet William’s Farewell to Black-Eyed Susan*, this three-act nautical drama renders a simply planned story in a dramatic fashion.



THE SURREY THEATRE IN 1826
(From an engraving by Daniel Havel)

William returns from a voyage to find his wife Susan in difficulties owing to her uncle Doggrass, the landlord of the cottage where she lives with old Dame Hatley, threatening to turn them out if the rent is not paid. Doggrass has certain dealings with the smugglers, one of whom has set his eyes on Susan and trumps up a tale of William's death. Then the fleet arrives off Deal, and William comes to the cottage at the very moment that Susan is being told he is dead. When the sailors are merrymaking they learn that they must be aboard again the same night. The captain of William's ship in an intoxicated state assaults Susan and is struck down by William, who arrives opportunely. Then comes the court martial on William for striking an officer he is found guilty, is sentenced, and about to be hanged when the Captain rushes on, crying, "If the prisoner be executed he is a murdered man!" William had applied for his discharge and the necessary document had been kept back by the villainy of Doggrass, so that when he struck Captain Crosstree he was no longer in the King's service. It is a simple, tender story, but with naturally dramatic moments, to which generations of theatre-goers have readily responded.

The dialogue is neat, pointed, but on the whole natural, much of the lighter talk coming from Dolly Mayflower, the only other woman character, and her lover Gnatbrain—"a half-gardener, half-waterman—a kind of alligator

that gets his breakfast from the shore, and his dinner from the sea." The opening scene is a sparring match between Gnatbrain and Doggrass:

Doggrass. Tut! if you're inclined to preach, here is a milestone—I'll leave you in its company.

Gnatbrain. Ay, it's all very well—very well;—but you have broken poor Susan's heart—and as for William——

Dog. What of him?

Gnat. The sharks of him for what you care. Didn't you make him turn sailor and leave his young wife, the little, delicate, black-eyed Susan, that pretty piece of soft-speaking womanhood, your niece?—Now, say, haven't you qualms? On a winter's night, now, when the snow is drifting at your door, what do you do?

Dog. Shut it.

Gnat. What, when in your bed, you turn upon one side at the thunder?

Dog. Turn round on the other. Will you go on with your catechism?

Gnat. No, I'd rather go and talk to the echoes. A fair day to you, Master Doggrass!—If your conscience——

Dog. Conscience!—phoo! my conscience sleeps well enough.

Gnat. Sleeps! don't wake it—it might alarm you.

Dog. One word with you; no more of your advice—I go about like a surly bull, and you a gadfly buzzing around me. From this moment throw off the part of counsellor.

Gnat. But, don't you see——

Dog. Don't you see these trees growing about us?

Gnat. Very well.

Dog. If a cudgel were cut from them for every knave who busies himself in the business of others—don't you think it would mightily open the prospect?

Gnat. Perhaps it might. And don't you think that if every hard-hearted, selfish rascal that destroys the happiness of others, were strung up to the boughs before they were cut for cudgels, it would, instead of opening the prospect, mightily darken it?

Dog. I have given you warning—take heed! take heed! and with this counsel I give you a good day
(*Exit.*)

Gnat. Ay, it's the only good thing you can give; and that, only good, because it's not your own. The rascal has no more heart than a bagpipe; one could sooner make Dover cliffs dance a reel to a penny whistle, than move him with words of pity or distress. No matter, let the old dog bark, his teeth will not last for ever—and I yet hope to see the day, when poor black-eyed Susan, and the jovial sailor, William, may defy the surly cur that has divided them."

Doggrass is the villain of the piece, and when he is drowned in his eagerness to hear of William's execution nobody is distressed, especially as his drowning is the means of William's escape at the last moment. Though William himself is made to patter sailor's talk—his every sentence is compact of sea terms—there are some strong scenes in which he plays a part, and it is not surprising that several bluff and hearty actors after the days of T. P. Cooke sought to win fresh laurels by impersonating him; his parting with Susan, his trial at the court martial, his distribution of souvenirs to his shipmates, are all strongly

dramatic scenes. In the original cast it may be said that John Baldwin Buckstone took the part of the lively Gnatbrain.

The fortunes of the play are worth following, for if its success did not greatly enrich the author it created in modern parlance something of a new theatrical "record." Despite the first night's applause with which William's parting from Susan and the dramatic *dénouement* when the tense feeling of tragedy is relieved as Captain Crosstree rushes on with "When William struck me he was not the King's sailor—I was not his officer," were received, it is recorded that the play did not for the first few days inspire anything like the popularity it was shortly after to win. Indeed, writing to a friend in the following year, Elliston declared that he played *Black-Eyed Susan* for forty-seven nights to a loss—though he added that since then he had cleared five thousand pounds by it!

In Moncrieff's *Ellistoniana* it is recorded that the following anecdote was current about this play: "The first night the house was not half full, and its success anything but positive. The following morning a theatrical friend, calling on Robert William, inquired how his *Black-Eyed Susan* had gone off. 'All in the *Downs*,' hummed the light-hearted manager, gaily laughing at fortune. Visiting him some time afterwards, the same theatrical friend found our comedian in high glee, enjoying himself over a bottle of black-strap.

‘Well, Elliston,’ said he, ‘how is *Black-Eyed Susan* going on now? “All in the Downs” still, I suppose, for I see you are in port.’ ‘No, sir,’ said Elliston, triumphantly, ‘you are wrong. We have at last set sail; the tide of popular opinion is set in in our favour, and with a fair wind, I have little doubt of making a speedy and prosperous voyage.’ ‘No doubt, no doubt,’ returned the friend, who was a bit of a wag, ‘I ought to have known you had set sail, that the wind was auspicious, and the tide with you, for I see you are more than half seas over already.’”

It is recorded of John Bannister, the witty comedian, that in his age he watched with interest the progress of rising performers, and paid the warmest tribute to their merits. In fact, the drama still continued to be his passion; the prosperity of theatres and the success of players always affording him the highest gratification. “I remember,” said Bannister’s biographer, “when he called on me one morning, he said, ‘I went to the Surrey Theatre last night; I saw *Black-Eyed Susan*; and egad, at my age, and with my experience in the dramatic way, I was ashamed to find myself every now and then wiping my eyes; but that T. P. Cooke!—his playing, his feeling, his perfect sailor-like manner, his appearance, his dancing! Oh, it was delightful all the way through! And it really was a pretty black-eyed girl that acted Susan.’”

Whether the success was immediate or for

a while delayed, there seems some conflict of testimony, but the final triumph was certain. Started early in June it continued to draw such good houses that on the last day of November it was brought out at Covent Garden as well and "most rapturously applauded."

"All London went over the water, and Cooke became a personage in society, as Garrick had been in the days of Goodman's Fields. Covent Garden borrowed the play and engaged the actor for an after-piece. A hackney cab carried the triumphant William, in his blue jacket and white trousers, from the Obelisk to Bow Street, and Mayfair maidens wept over the stirring situations and laughed over the searching dialogue, which had moved, an hour before, the tears and merriment of the Borough. On the three hundredth night of representation, the walls of the theatre were illuminated, and vast multitudes filled the thoroughfares. When subsequently reproduced at Drury Lane, it kept off ruin for a time even from that magnificent misfortune. Actors and managers throughout the country reaped a golden harvest."¹

It seems, however, to have been T. P. Cooke's confidence in the play rather than the confidence of the Covent Garden management which led to this experiment, for the actor gave his services gratuitously for six nights, and was justified in so doing, for a good "run" of the piece at Covent Garden—and it was again and again "in the bills" there until January 1833—accompanied that at the Surrey. It was

¹ Hepworth Dixon, the *Athenæum*, 1857.

only "William" who appeared at both houses; at Covent Garden his "Susan" was Miss Ellen Tree, who later married Charles Kean.

Covent Garden was but a step in the success of the piece, for already it had been taken to audiences far from London, so that it would seem that Elliston was exaggerating when he said that he had played it to a loss for forty-seven nights. On August 12, *Black-Eyed Susan* was given at Norwich during the Assize week, and in the same month there are records of its production at Cambridge, Liverpool, Exeter, Newcastle, Dublin and Durham; it "redeemed the Plymouth Theatre from ruin, and put nearly a hundred pounds a week into the pockets of the Brighton manager." In December, while the play was being given at Covent Garden, a burlesque on it, *Black-Eyed Sukey*, was presented with great applause at the Olympic, and a year later, while it was again "on" at Covent Garden, it was being burlesqued just over the way in the pantomime of *Davy Jones* at Drury Lane, wherein Captain Crosstree, William and Black-Eyed Susan appeared, the part of Susan being acted by Wieland, celebrated by Douglas Jerrold in a pleasant essay as the very first of stage devils who made such more than a commonplace absurdity.¹

¹ *Some Account of a Stage Devil* (in the *Brownrigg Papers*). A passage in commendation of the German actor may be cited: "Wieland has evidently studied the attributes of the evil principle; with true German profundity, he has taken their length, and their depth, and

In May 1830, it was announced in the *Athenæum* that "Miss Clara Fisher has been performing *Black-Eyed Susan* to Mr. De Camp's William with distinguished success at Savannah," so that the play was not long in travelling very far afield.

As one historian had summed it up, "the success of *Black-Eyed Susan* was, undoubtedly, very great, if not unprecedented; and though it brought poor pecuniary profit to the author,

their breadth, he has all the devil at his very finger ends, and richly deserves the very splendid silver-gilt horns and tail (manufactured by Rundell and Bridges) presented to him a few nights since by the company at the English Opera House; presented with a speech from the stage-manager, which, or I have been grossly misinformed, drew tears from the eyes of the very sceneshifters.

"Can anybody forget Wieland's devil in the *Daughter of the Danube*? Never was there a more dainty bit of infernal nature. It lives in my mind like one of Hoffman's tales, a realization of the hero of the nightmare, a thing in almost horrible affinity with human passions. How he eyed the naiades, how he laughed and ogled, and faintly approached, then wandered round the object of his demoniacal affections! And then how he burst into action! How he sprang, and leapt, and whirled, and, chuckling at his own invincible nature, spun like a tectotum at the sword of his baffled assailant! And then his yawn and sneeze! There was absolute poetry in them—the very highest poetry of the ludicrous: a fine imagination to produce such sounds as part of the strange, wild, grotesque phantom—to give it a voice that, when we heard it, we felt to be the only voice such a thing could have. There is fine truth in the devils of Wieland. We feel that they live and have their being in the realms of fancy; they are not stereotype commonplaces, but most rare and delicate monsters, brought from the air, the earth, or the flood; and wherever they are from, bearing in them the finest characteristics of their mysterious and fantastic whereabouts."

it was of great service to him. Of Douglas Jerrold's popularity as a dramatist neither actor nor manager could rob him." The author's "pecuniary profit" was sixty pounds! And a sixth of that was gained by selling the copyright of the piece. The result of such a dramatic success to-day would mean an independence for life for the lucky playwright.

Small as was the gain to the dramatist himself he was made still more bitterly to feel his position by the cool way in which the magnanimous Elliston on the three hundredth night of the piece—having illuminated the outside of the theatre as for a national festival—said to him, "My dear boy, why don't you get your friends to present you with a bit of plate?" It never occurred to the Surrey autocrat that he, whose house had been saved from the verge of ruin by the new play, might have behaved more handsomely to the writer of it. But if Elliston himself did not show ordinary generosity in his treatment of his young dramatist, Elliston's biographer did not even show common justice. *Black-Eyed Susan* is acknowledged in Raymond's *Memoirs* of the celebrated manager to have retrieved that manager's fortunes, yet the name of the author of the piece is studiously withheld! Small wonder is it that as he grew up and wrested his position from the world in despite of such meanness and neglect that Douglas Jerrold frequently employed the armoury of his wit against those who controlled

the theatres, as well as against those who kept them supplied with adaptations and translations from the French. Davidge, we have seen, was not spared by his youthful writer of plays, and Elliston, the bacchanalian, had his weaknesses no less incisively touched upon. It was during the rehearsal of *Black-Eyed Susan* that some important individual demanded instant audience of Elliston. He was informed that the manager could not be seen.

“How is this?” he exclaimed wrathfully. “I can see a duke or a prime minister any time in the morning, but I can never see Mr. Elliston.”

Jerrold, who heard the explosion, attempted to pacify the visitor by saying: “There’s one comfort, if Elliston is invisible in the morning, he’ll do the handsome thing any afternoon by seeing you twice, for at that time of day he invariably sees double.”

The full significance of the success of *Black-Eyed Susan* to the Surrey Theatre management may be gathered from the following passage from the *Memoirs* just referred to—

“Elliston now played out the best and strongest card Fortune appeared to have dealt to him, in this his last mortal rubber of the Thespian game. *Black-Eyed Susan* was the honour in his hand, which sustained by the *Jack* (T. P. Cooke), occasioned him to rise, at the conclusion of the season, a considerable winner. This drama, however, for the first half-dozen nights, though much applauded, did not give

promise of the extraordinary success which subsequently attended it. On the second week of its representation, the piece rose like a rocket into the sky of public favour, and became, from that time, a blaze of popular admiration. The receipts now averaged five hundred pounds per week, out of which one hundred and fifty pounds clear fell on the profit side of the manager. Cooke's salary was sixty pounds per week, and half a clear benefit in every sixth week of the representation."

For merely writing the piece Jerrold received the same amount of money that Cooke did for acting in it for one week!

In the autumn of the following year (1830) when *Black-Eyed Susan* was revived at Covent Garden¹ with T. P. Cooke in his original part and Miss Cawse as Susan, George Daniel wrote in his *Tatler* notice the following amusing comment on the actor's name: "By the way, what are the Christian names of T. P. Cooke? Is he Theophilus Philip, or Thomas Patterson, or what? or is it necessary to the mystery of his reputation that he should always remain Mr. Tee Pee Cooke, as if he was Captain Cook's son by a Chinese wife. We have a grudge against these mysteries of initials. What is Miss *Eff Aitch Kelly*? and why is Mr. Farren Mr. *Double U Farren*? We were in pain for the appellation of Miss H. Cawse,

¹ In June, 1831, *Black-Eyed Susan* was revived at the Surrey with Miss Scott in her original part, and was given simultaneously at the Queen's Theatre (with T. P. Cooke) and at the Coburg along with its author's *Martha Willis*.

till we learnt her name was Harriett. Harriett is a good name, but Aitch was a vile precursor."

Before leaving the subject of this play, the most popular of those traceable to Jerrold's pen, it may be as well to refer to another often-repeated error. It has frequently been stated in works of reference and elsewhere, that the famous nautical drama was written before its author was one-and-twenty. One authority, indeed, in one short paragraph includes a second error with this, for we read in *Knight's Penny Encyclopædia* that Jerrold's "first dramatic production, *Black-Eyed Susan*—the most popular drama of modern times or any time—was written before Mr. Jerrold had attained his twenty-first year." Thanks to Elliston's letter, we know that the play was not written until its author had completed his six-and-twentieth year, and it was so far from being his "first dramatic production" that it was the twenty-first of those that have proved traceable. This latter error may have been helped by the fact that *Black-Eyed Susan* was the earliest of his plays which Jerrold included many years later in his "Collected Writings."

Following on the success of the nautical drama, and while it was enjoying a run then unprecedented in theatrical annals, Jerrold wrote other plays which Elliston duly produced at the Surrey. On July 13 of the same year—a month or so after the production of *Black-Eyed Susan*—was presented also a two-act

melodrama, *Vidocq, the French Police Spy*, adapted for representation from the autobiography of Vidocq, with T. P. Cooke in the title part. Here again the Coburg Theatre appears to have stolen a march upon the Surrey manager by producing a play with the same title a few days earlier. Though sufficiently successful to justify its publication, the play did not repeat the success of its predecessor. Vidocq, with his many disguises and sudden and surprising appearances, must have provided a capital part for T. P. Cooke, and the French master of deceit have afforded a strong contrast in characterization to the actor who was still appearing several times a week in the part of the frank and breezy British sailor William.

The play is one of action rather than of dialogue, but an amusing scrap of the latter may be given where Vidocq escaped from the galleys, and disguised as a recruiting sergeant, patters to a mob to prevent suspicion falling on him. Indeed, he declares that he has just refused to enlist Vidocq, as "we have nothing in the army but prime picked honest fellows."

"*Vidocq*. Now, silence! Those gentlemen who would wish to make their fortunes let them listen to the offers of the Republic. You have heard of India! soldiers are wanted for that best of all places—would you have gold, pearls, or diamonds? The roads are paved with them—if you don't like to stoop for them, the savages will bring them to you!

Fanfan. Is this true?

Vidocq. True! do I look like a man who would lie?

All. No, no, no, it's all true—we believe the gentleman.

Vidocq. Do you like women? there they are of all colours, black, white, blue and yellow—you may have any one or all.

Fanfan. Is this true?

Vidocq. True! do I look like a man who would lie?

All. No, no, no, we believe it.

Vidocq. Do you love wine? there it is of all sorts—Malaga, Bordeaux, Champagne—no, I'll be honest with you, there is no Burgundy, it will not bear the voyage, but any other, at twopence, and sometimes nothing a bottle. Then for the fruits! you can't walk without the pine-apples bumping upon your heads—can't sleep without the peaches dropping into your mouths—and for the oranges, why, you walk upon them.

Fanfan. Is this true, do you think?

Vidocq. True! do I look like a man who would tell a lie?

All. No, no, no.

Vidocq. I know that if I were talking to women and children, I might enlarge upon the delicacies, but I am not, I am speaking to men who despise such things. People may tell you savages eat white men with salt—it's false, they don't. People may tell you stories about the yellow fever—all inventions. If the yellow fever were in India, would not the place be full of hospitals? Now, I can tell you, there's not a single hospital there—isn't that convincing?

All. Yes, yes.

Vidocq. People will talk about mosquitoes and rattlesnakes. Won't you have black men to fan

away the flies? And as for the snakes, don't the rattles in their tails warn you to get out of the way?

Fanfan. Now is this true?

Vidocq. True! do I look like a man who would lie?

All. No, no.

Vidocq. Gentlemen, I don't want any of you to be led away by my discourse—go, go to India and satisfy yourselves.

1st Recruit. I'll go.

2nd R. And I.

3rd R. And I.

Vidocq. Come with me, then, gentlemen, come with me, and I'll enlist you in the service of the Republic. Three cheers for the Republic."

Apart from the escapades of Vidocq, the only romantic story of the piece comes at the close, when a certain wealthy farmer's house is to be robbed, and the robbers include the seducer of the farmer's daughter, and should have included the farmer's errant son, only he becomes his sister's champion, and the play ends with a sensational picture in which the girl throws herself before her attacked lover, and the young man falls penitent at the feet of his father. As something of a topical piece—a piece the writing of which was presumably ordered by Elliston, owing to the brief popularity of Vidocq's supposed autobiography—it is a good and spirited dramatization of a series of episodes, but is not otherwise remarkable.

In October came another play, one of those written to order because of the success at

another theatre of a piece on the same theme. Elliston announced that on October 7 he would stage *The Flying Dutchman*—the same, presumably, as was then appearing at one of the patent houses—but when the night arrived he hastily substituted another play, and appeared before his audience to explain that this was rendered necessary owing to an injunction having been obtained to forbid him carrying out his promise; but, he added, the patrons of the Surrey Theatre should not be disappointed, for in the following week he would produce another *Flying Dutchman*, which should be specially written by the author of *Black-Eyed Susan*. Eight days passed, and the play had been written, rehearsed, and was duly produced on October 15. Then on November 3 came another of his plays, *The Lonely Man of Study*, but of neither of these pieces are any particulars available.

If the following strange story, which I owe to a cutting from an unnamed newspaper of over fifty years ago, be true, it was apparently shortly after the success of *Black-Eyed Susan* that Douglas Jerrold came to know that irresponsible man of many talents, William Maginn:

Dr. Maginn's acquaintance with Jerrold commenced under singular circumstances. Douglas Jerrold, sitting one morning in Baldwin's ante-room, in New Bridge Street, London, Maginn came down from the editor's room and approached him with great frankness, and

asked him how he did. Jerrold, who was of a retiring disposition, seeing a stranger accost him so intimately, shrank back a little, and returned his inquiries with an air of distant civility. "Pooh, pooh!" says Maginn; "my name is Maginn, and you are Jerrold, the author of *Black-Eyed Susan*; and though not formally acquainted with one another we should be acquainted as brother writers and literary men; therefore, without any ceremony, will you sup with me at the British in Cockspur Street, to-night, where you will meet with half-a-dozen jolly dogs of the press, who, I think, will please you?" Jerrold, admiring the frankness of the introduction, accepted the invitation, and met the Doctor at the appointed time. The party, which principally consisted of Sir John Hamilton, Bob Hamilton, Sir John Sinclair, and one or two editors, was, as Maginn predicted, quite agreeable to Jerrold, and the whisky-toddy was in the ascendant to a late hour in the morning. A little before the party separated Maginn went out of the room, and, in a few minutes afterwards, his voice was heard rather loud in the adjoining passage in conversation with Element, who then kept the British. Jerrold immediately flew to his new friend to inquire what was the matter, when Maginn, with great *sang-froid*, replied, "Oh, a mere trifle—this blackguard of a landlord has refused my note for the reckoning." "You forget at the same time," says Mr. Element, "to tell Mr. Jerrold that

you owe me forty or fifty pounds already, which I cannot get a penny of; and since you think proper to explain matters so publicly, I now tell you I will neither take your note nor your word any longer." "Well, well," says Jerrold, "let us have no words about it; it is not the first time a gentleman wanted cash. Will you take my word for your bill?" "Certainly, and for as much as you like." "Ah, then," says Maginn, whispering to Element, "send in brandy and water all round and add it to the bill." The brandy and accompaniment were accordingly sent in. Jerrold pledged his word for the amount, and in a few days afterwards paid it. To the credit of Maginn he refunded the money to the author, although, from circumstances, a lapse of six years intervened between the loan and its repayment.

Jerrold's words put into the mouth of a character in one of his plays, embodied advice, the usefulness of which he was to have brought home to him more than once: "Give a friend your hand as often as you like—but never, never, let there be a pen in it." When *Punch* started his first almanack, Maginn, who died in the second year of the paper and was never on the staff, is believed to have been enlisted as a helper, though one account says that that almanack was entirely the joint work of Henry Mayhew and H. P. Grattan.

CHAPTER V

“ THOMAS À BECKET ” AND “ THE DEVIL’S DUCAT ”

1829–1831

THE success of *Black-Eyed Susan* was of great assistance to its author in helping him forward in his career, by placing the stages of the “ patent houses ” within easier reach of his pen; and before the close of the year he had plays in hand for both Drury Lane and Covent Garden. The dramatist had removed from Seymour Street, St. Pancras, and was living at this time at No. 4 Augustus Square, near Regent’s Park—“ a small two-storied, countrified cottage at the junction of Park Village and Augustus Street ”—and was getting through a considerable amount of miscellaneous writing and journalistic work as well as supplying manager Elliston with pieces as required. He had a young family of three children, the eldest of whom was but four, so that had not ambition been sufficient to spur him forward the necessity of providing for the home would have been enough effectually to do so. Within four or five months after the production of the popular nautical drama but three pieces, so far as is now ascertainable, were required

from Jerrold's pen, and the writer was thus enabled to concentrate his powers upon a more ambitious task. He was meditating a higher flight than he had previously attempted; was at work upon a piece dealing with one of the most dramatic periods of English history.

On the thirtieth of November *Thomas à Becket*, a historical play in five acts, was produced at the Surrey Theatre, and was so very well received as to afford much gratification to the author—the “little Shakespeare in a camlet cloak” as his friend Laman Blanchard dubbed him. This was the most ambitious piece of work which its author had essayed, and some passages from the preface to the rare first edition (it is not in the British Museum and the preface is not given in later issues) may be quoted :

“The reader will, on a perusal of this drama, perceive that, whilst it has been the aim of the dramatist rigidly to follow the great marks laid down by history, he has, in a few instances, been compelled to take some slight liberties with the less prominent facts connected with the story of his high-minded yet arrogant hero. It has been the chief purpose of the writer to delineate the character, in all its various modifications, of Thomas à Becket. . . . It has been necessary to introduce several characters of fiction, for the more varied conduct of the drama. Still, there may be some to complain of a want of theatrical interest in the play. History is not to be degraded or sported with by an impertinent alloy of invention, or it would have been easy to make King Henry II

fall in love with and wed a swineherd's daughter, and the Archbishop of Canterbury to pronounce an oration at the monarch's nuptials. What is often thoughtlessly called for as "interest" (the commodity abounding in French melodramas), becomes absurdity, if wrought at the expense of truth or probability. The writer conceives that the dramatist who succeeds in justly delineating the feelings and passions of a great historical character, and in giving a correct view of his mind, working out one paramount object—is certain of the voices of the reflecting and may hear with a smile of indifference the crude objections of the superficial.

"Perhaps the whole range of English history does not offer to the dramatist a more tempting, and withal a more arduous subject, than the life of Thomas à Becket. . . . Mr. Rumball, to whom was assigned the very arduous task of representing Thomas à Becket, acquitted himself so as to impose a great debt of obligation on the writer. The actor showed the character alternately dignified and impassioned—begetting in audiences, 'albeit unused' to five act histories, a respect and approbation highly flattering to the capabilities of the performer. There are some auditories from whom even an attentive silence may be received as no mean mark of commendation."

The closing words suggest that the Surrey audience was less demonstratively appreciative than were some of the critics of the play. The Prologue "written by a Friend" (probably Laman Blanchard) reads as though it might be the work of the author himself, with its insistence upon the English drama, its hits at the fashion of adapting from the French,

and at the craze for making plays spectacular settings for "real live" animals.

"To-night, a novel, but a noble guest,
 Crowned with old wreaths, and clad in classic vest,
 Comes here—a relic of our Golden Day—
 That long-sought absentee, an English Play. . . .
 Fain we'd have you find,
 The play of fancy, and the flash of mind.
 Dragons and demons, Counts bow'd down by
 crime,
 The pleasing horror of a German elime :
 French sentiment, French feeling—richly clad
 In sighs and songs, till melody runs mad—
 Clipp'd and 'adapted to our stage'—(weak wine
 Translated into water; flavour fine!)—
 All these are banished hence, old Fiction flies,
 AND ENGLISH MANNERS—HABITS—HISTORY,
 RISE :
 We offer here—no masque or gaudy dream—
 A native Drama on a native theme !
 If in this effort, though all else should fail,
 You own, while wearied with our author's tale,
 A love of NATURE and of SHAKESPEARE reigns,
 His wreath is won !—the rest with you remains."

George Daniel may be quoted as showing in brief the scope of the tragedy thus prologued :

"Mr Jerrold has availed himself of the reports of the scandalous lives of the clergy, and exhibited a profligate monk in the character of Philip de Brois, implicating the archbishop, and making him in part pimp to the base designs of his libidinous brother. He has dramatized the council at Clarendon, brought Henry and Becket into hot polemical discussion, and dissolved it by a troop of armed knights, after the summary fashion of the royal bully-rock. He has marched Becket, bearing the silver cross, into the

presence of the King, and, under the presumed protection of that sacred symbol, made him display a constancy and courage worthy of so distinguished a member of the Church militant. We lose sight of him during his six years' exile in France, and meet him, for a short season, when he returns to his ancient quarters at Canterbury. But few incidents occur between that period and his death; and the curtain drops on his martyrdom at the altar. This play is written in an ambitious style; there is a continued attempt at apophthegm between Moldwarp and Swart, and every opportunity is seized to exaggerate the pride, luxury and lasciviousness of the Church. It was produced at the Surrey Theatre with great care by Mr. Elliston, and received every justice in the acting. Mr. Jerrold, actuated by the desire to produce an *English Play*, drew entirely from his own resources, and gained the applause he so justly merited by his endeavour to render a highly interesting chapter of British history popular with the million."

Though it gained applause, as Daniel says, the piece did not altogether succeed, it did not have such a run as might somewhat confidently have been looked for after the success of *Black-Eyed Susan*, but possibly the note struck was too serious, the level of dramatic dignity was too rare for an audience readier to respond to the simpler emotions of more striking incidents than to a play the motive of which was the quarrel between Church and State. Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton has suggested that it was the choice of motive which militated against the play's holding the public interest for long. Possibly it would have

made more noteworthy a success could it have been originally produced at one of the patent houses. It was in reviewing Lord Tennyson's *Becket* that Mr. Watts-Dunton criticized Jerrold's earlier play on the same theme, and pointed out that there is in fact "but one way of reading Becket's story that was in any way calculated to enlist the sympathies of a popular audience, and this reading is not the one chosen by Lord Tennyson" or by Jerrold.

"A glance at Douglas Jerrold's play upon this subject," continued the critic, "will show what we mean. Jerrold's *Thomas à Becket*, brought out by Elliston with great care and intelligence in 1829, was as full of pregnant dialogue as any of Jerrold's works. The character of Becket was exceedingly well conceived, and such minor characters as Walter de Mapes, Swart and Moldwarp were full of life and colour. It is true that the play flagged in interest after the third act, but it was never dull, and it exhibited a command of true spectacular effects such as will not be found in Jerrold's later plays. . . . Suppose, however, that the motive of Jerrold's play had been, not a struggle between Church and State, but a struggle between the champion of an oppressed race and its oppressors: suppose that this popular dramatist had challenged the sympathies of his audience by depicting a struggle between the archbishop as the champion of his downtrodden Saxon fellow-countrymen, and the King as chief of the Norman oppressors who held the land: would not an English audience have risen to the play?"¹

¹ *Athenæum*, Jan. 3, 1885.

As a literary performance *Thomas à Becket* was unquestionably an advance on the author's earlier dramatic work, whether regarded for the larger treatment of a great theme or whether considered for its full and pregnant dialogue, its characterization, or its serious attempt to render in worthy stage form a great historical episode. The story opens in a hall in Becket's London palace, with a couple of his servants meeting :

Moldwarp. Good-day, fellow Swart; what hour is on the dial?

Swart. I know not, care not. Time has broken his glass and thrown the sand into my eyes. I have no use to put him to, save to whiten my hair and scratch pits in my cheek. . . . And what a pair of knaves are we! Rascals, that eat and sleep, and thicken our blood with idleness, casting away manhood as part of a bygone mode, and standing two breathing statues, in a great man's hall! I never pass a beehive that I do not redden to the ears.

Moldwarp. Such statues as we, good Swart, are the true furniture of wealth. Willow backs, and eyes that say, 'I look but by your leave' are the real household finery of your golden gentleman. Is't our fault that our best employment is the counting our fingers? When Becket was Chancellor, he was full of show and merriment: then, thou wast his falconer;—looked to his birds, and their Milan bells; wast a gay fellow, that could laugh with the loudest: then was I the master of the dogs, and could chuckle too, and take my quart of mulberry without breathing twice. Now, Becket is archbishop: the birds have flown, the dogs run away. I doubt if there be a kestrel or a

trundle-tail left. . . . Ah ! what a fine Chancellor was spoilt, when our master was made an archbishop !

Swart. Aye; we must now duck to Saint Becket. He hath discarded glitter, and fallen in love with sack-cloth.

Moldwarp. They say, he mortifies himself past belief; that under his robes he wears a hair shirt, next his skin.

Swart. Ha ! ha ! a piety of bristles !

Moldwarp. Nay, be not irreverent; all saints have done as much.

Swart. Aye. Yet if sanctitude sprout from a hair shirt, I marvel we do not canonize the bears. Farewell."

When Swart goes off Moldwarp sums him up saying, "That fellow can cover more brain with his little finger, than many with their whole palm. There is no handling him; touch him where you will, and like a porcupine, he pierces you. He keep falcons ! he is worthy to bear Jupiter's eagle. I had rather hear him growl than others sing."

The first act of the tragedy shows us the Chancellor become Churchman, hints at the growing rivalry of King and Archbishop, and indicates the subsidiary romance of Lucia Vincent, who has been forced to flee from home owing to the unwelcome advances of her late priest, Philip de Brois, and, thanks to the assistance of Swart, is safely married to her true lover, Walter Breakspear. Philip—the villain of the piece—denounces her (untruly, of course) as one who has broken her

vows, so that along with, and made part of, the struggle between the powers temporal and the powers spiritual is this of the young maligned wife. With the second act, Becket, a severe, serious and heroic Becket, appears on the scene, and Philip emphasizes his charges, to be met with a slight reprimand that gives occasion to Becket for the telling of the romantic story of his parents :

“ Woman hath no constancy ! Wrong not her who bore me by such censure. Hear a short tale, then own the charge untrue. My father was a soldier of the cross and fought in Palestine. He was taken—enslaved—a hero of the faith, he wore his bonds as garlands. His master had one lovely girl ; my father taught the young heretic by stealth our creed : she would weep over the Christian prisoner, gemming his clanking fetters with her tears. My father gained his freedom, reached his home ; the girl remained amidst the terrors of the war,—a tender floweret in a soldier’s helm. At length, urged by uneasy thoughts,—guided as by a wand of flame, by her new faith,—she left her golden clime, nor did the terrors of the wilderness, or the billows of the sea restrain her, till, with her heart brimfull of hope—her Saracenic tongue enriched with but one poor word of English, Gilbert—my father’s name—(he had taught her to breathe the syllables, blithe music in his late captivity)—she found herself in London. Yet, how to find my father ? With untired feet, from morn till darkness, she would thread each street and suburb ; and, at every step, as the dove broods in one note o’er its hopes,—so with her one word of English—‘ Gilbert ’—would she tell her story.

‘ Gilbert ! ’ ‘ Gilbert ! ’ fell from her lip, as down a coral shelf drop follows drop. A cherub heard the word and bore it to my father. Angels sang when they did marry. Say not again woman hath no constancy ! ”

In the third act we have the King in council at Clarendon, when the quarrel between him and Becket becomes sharply defined, and the Archbishop, refusing to allow Philip de Brois to be tried by the secular court, and refusing to return moneys of which he had been absolved, pronounces the Church’s ban on Lucia for cleaving to her husband. In the fourth act King and Archbishop are both in France, and from his late servants and others at home it is shown that the Churchman is in lowest disgrace, his supporters banished.

Then Idonea, a nun—the only woman besides Lucia in the play—comes on as bearer of letters of excommunication from Becket to the Bishop of London and his fellows, and dialogue between her and Swart (who proves to be her brother) contrasts the “ softest wax, moulded by the hand of craft and superstition ” and the critical spirit which has arisen against the dominance of the Churchman. Then comes announcement of the unexpectedly dramatic return of Becket. The fifth act opens with the foolish Snipe and a fellow hurrying “ like fowls to barley to welcome ” Becket. We see Becket deeply hurt but dignified at his repudiation by the prince whom he had brought up, and Philip de Brois

pressing his malevolent designs against Lucia, whom he has seized. A brief scene shows the knights who have hastened over from France that they may act on King Henry's hasty words, "Am I so beset with cowards, that none will revenge me of this turbulent priest?" An interview between Lucia and Becket—"at the hour of vespers, on the sacred altar pledge me the oath and you are free!"—hastens the play to its tragic close in Canterbury Cathedral.

There is a largeness of purpose, skilful, pregnant dialogue—Becket's own speeches suggest that the author designed to use blank verse—and a sufficiency of action to make this a really impressive example of the historical drama.

The Epilogue, which was spoken by Miss Scott—the Lucia of the play and the creator of the part of Black-Eyed Susan—was written by Cornelius Webbe, who in the course of it re-emphasized the fact that it was a native drama—not as the dramatist said of the work of one of his contemporary adapters the product of a *steal* pen—

"Come, Sirs, your verdict! Remember the offender
Is by no means an old one—so be tender!
'Guilty' he pleads to this most grave offence—
Of writing a new play—in every sense
Of English birth and growth; which, in our time,
When *not to steal* is held a losing crime—
When more than half our plays, like half our fleet,
Are taken 'from the French'—when not discreet,

But, in our author, you will sure forgive
His British bravery, and let him live."

Cordial, however, as was the reception of the work, it ran but for six nights, when it was withdrawn in favour of more popular, if less literary, fare. The play, according to one dramatic critic of the day, was "well got up, but indifferently acted," though George Daniel—the familiar "D—G" of theatrical criticism—recorded an opposite opinion. If the play did not gain the continued support of the many who award the fruits of immediate success it won the suffrage of the still more important few. Winning the popular ear had not proved especially profitable to Douglas Jerrold, much as it had done for his employer, but that sweet acknowledgment of his powers which is always dear to the heart of the earnest worker was now accorded to the young writer by a number of men of letters who had already won their position. A friend congratulating him on *Thomas à Becket* said, "You'll be the Surrey Shakespeare." "The sorry Shakespeare, you mean," replied Jerrold, as ready to utter a jest against himself as against another.

Men of letters must be taken in its wider sense as including women, for among the earliest letters to Douglas Jerrold which I have is the following from Mary Russell Mitford, the bright, vivacious author of *Our Village* and of a number of plays. The "interlined and blotted note, so very untidy and unladylike," runs:

“*Three Mile Cross, near Reading,*

“*Saturday evening, December 14th, 1829.*

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have just received from Mr. Willey your very kind and gratifying note. The plays which you have been so good as to send me are not yet arrived; but fearing from Mr. Willey’s letter that it may be some days before I receive them, I do not delay writing to acknowledge your polite attention. I have as yet read neither of them, but I *know* that I shall be greatly delighted by the merits which I shall find in both—in the first, by that truth of the touch which has commanded a popularity quite unrivalled in our day; in the second by the higher and prouder qualities of the tragic poet. The subject of Thomas à Becket interests me particularly, as I had at one time a design to write a tragedy called *Henry the Second*, in which his saintship would have played a considerable part. My scheme was full of license and anachronism, embracing the apocryphal story of Rosamond and Eleanor, the rebellious sons—not the hackneyed John and Richard, but the best and worst of the four—Henry and Geoffrey, linking the scenes together as best I might, and ending with the really dramatic catastrophe of Prince Henry. I do not at all know how the public would have tolerated a play so full of faults, and it is well replaced by your more classical and regular drama. I was greatly interested by the account of the enthusiastic reception given by the old admirers of *Black-Eyed Susan* to a successor rather above their sphere. It was hearty, genial, English—much like the cheering which an election mob might have bestowed on some speech of Pitt, or Burke, or Sheridan, which they were sure was fine, although they hardly understood it.

“If I had a single copy of *Rienzi* at hand this should not go unaccompanied. I have written to Mr. Willey

to procure me some and hope soon to have the pleasure of requesting your acceptance of one. In the meantime I pray you to pardon this interlined and blotted note, so very untidy and unladylike, but which I never can help, and to excuse the wafer, and the absence of the Christian name. I am sending a frankful of letters to town and am afraid of overweight. My father begs his best compliments and I am, with every good wish,

“Very sincerely yours,

“M. R. MITFORD.”

The plays which the young dramatist had sent to Miss Mitford in her Berkshire retirement were evidently *Black-Eyed Susan* and *Thomas à Becket*, though I have not come across so early an edition of the former. That such kindly recognition of his work as is shown in this friendly letter was well appreciated is evidenced by the care with which the recipient kept it. Indeed to-day, but for a slight staining of the paper, the treasured letter is as fresh as when it left its writer's hand more than eighty years ago. The following reply, from 4 Augustus Square, Regent's Park, is undated, but was evidently written at the beginning of 1830, for the condolence which the writer offers was occasioned by the death of Miss Mitford's mother on the first day of that year.

“MY DEAR MADAM,—May I be allowed to offer my sincere expressions of condolence for the loss you have so recently sustained, and to venture a hope of

your timely recovery from the effects of so afflicting a visitation.

“That the dramas, which I have taken the liberty of intruding upon your notice, receive your commendation is to me a subject of pride and pleasure: for wanting the suffrage of the few, popular success is as empty as it is frequently immediate.

“Long before I could hope that any effort of mine would receive the attention of Mr. Talfourd, I had admired the active, liberal and dispassionate tone of that gentleman’s criticisms; consequently I felt additional gratification from his praise in this month’s *New Monthly*. At the present ebb of dramatic criticism, when *ipse dixit*, not analysis, decides on the faults or merits of writers, it is most encouraging, especially to the young beginner, to know there is at least one publication where he may meet with fair and gentlemanly treatment. There is, too, another satisfaction to the dramatist, who, at the outset, encounters the prejudice and ignorance of what is termed ‘daily and weekly criticism.’ He has but to make two or three fortunate hits—no matter whether borrowed from Messrs. Scribe or Mr. Colburn—to change unthinking abuse into equally ignorant encomium. With such critics how short the pause from a hiss to a huzza!

“My *Witchfinder* at Drury Lane was a decided failure. The subject was ill chosen; for few who condemned it were aware that they were judging an attempted representation of historical character, but condemned it as a monstrous fiction. Neither had the piece one intrinsic advantage. Mr. Farren first injured it by his extravagant praise, and then made the mischief complete by his utter misconception of the part. Then came the learning, the intelligence, and the liberality of the newspapers. In the present

day a moderately gifted dramatist has a pretty time of it: if he succeed his piece has the immortality of a month—if he fail, his name is gibbeted in every journal as a dullard or a coxcomb. French melodramas have ruined us.

“ I have, Madam, to apologize for inflicting so long a letter on your patience, and again repeating my wishes for your convalescence, and my acknowledgements of the honour which you have done me in the notice taken of my dramas (which, unless they be followed by much worthier things, I had rather had never been), I remain, my dear Madam,

“ Ever truly and obliged,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

“ French melodramas have ruined us ”—this expressed a lasting grievance with Douglas Jerrold. Against adaptation and translation he sternly set his face. When it was proposed to him that he should adapt a piece for Drury Lane he replied, emphatically, “ I will come into this theatre as an original dramatist or not at all.” But it was not only the rivalry of the easy-going adapters from which playwrights suffered. Having written their work they found it, owing to the monopoly of the patent houses and the state of the law with regard to what Thomas Hood termed “ copyright and copywrong,” impossible to claim any protection for it as property. In a note to the preface to *Thomas à Becket* the author wrote: “ It must, unfortunately, be allowed that the present period is not the most auspicious to the production of original dramas: when

every other species of literature, save that of the theatre, is protected by legislative enactments from unprincipled piracy, it is not to be expected that many writers will be found to expose their plays, as Alfred hung up his golden bracelets, in sheer contempt of robbers. In England, the bantlings of the dramatist are a proscribed race; they come under a kind of outlawry;—‘whoso findeth them, may slay them.’ Whilst such is the case, it will be in vain to hope for a rapid improvement in the modern drama.”

Before the close of the year in which the minor-theatre popularity that had been won by earlier plays had widened by the great success of *Black-Eyed Susan*, Douglas Jerrold was given the opportunity of writing for both Drury Lane and Covent Garden. It was on December 19 that he made his appearance—with an English play on an English theme, as he had said—at Drury Lane, and it proved a disastrous attempt to win the ear of the “patent” theatre audience. The play was *The Witchfinder*, and as the author said in his letter to Mary Russell Mitford, it was “a decided failure,” the performance not being repeated. Jerrold’s own explanation of the causes of the failure are borne out by some of the contemporary criticism, for the piece is described as not having been dealt with fairly by the management, and as having been inadequately acted, and as a consequence, said one critic, it “met with a most uncourteous

reception; for great part of the second act was merely dumb show."

This was a melodrama founded on a novel of the same name (published in 1824), dealing with the life of the notorious Matthew Hopkins, by the author of *The Lollards*. I have found the following summary of the story among the notices which the piece received: Judith, a young maiden residing under the guardianship of John Sterne, is wooed by Justice Beril, who, finding that his suit does not proceed so prosperously as he could wish, employs Matthew Hopkins, the Witch Finder, to plead his cause. Matthew, however, has had an eye to the maiden himself, and takes this opportunity of disclosing his passion. Judith rejects his love with indignation and horror (for her heart is already bestowed on Evelyn). Hopkins, in revenge, denounces her for a witch; and when she is on the point of being torn to pieces by the ignorant mob, her lover rushes in and rescues her.

Very naturally the author felt somewhat chagrined over this failure of his first attempt to make good a position as something other than a writer of minor drama. The "minor" dramatist of those days was not in a fortunate position, the mere fact that he was writing for the unpatented houses was sufficient to ensure his works being almost wholly ignored by the critics or, if they were mentioned, sufficient to ensure his name being withheld from the criticism.

About three weeks after *The Witchfinder* made its ill-starred appearance at Drury Lane a new piece from Jerrold's pen was produced at the Surrey Theatre. This was *Sally in Our Alley*, which had been written for Covent Garden, but in consequence of the fate of *The Witchfinder* the author wisely decided to "transplant his offspring to a nursery more suitable to its unassuming merits."

This is a two-act drama owing nothing more than its title to Henry Carey's popular ballad, but, by the very use of that title, as a contemporary critic put it, charming away all critical bile. The scene is laid at Putney, and the story of the piece has been thus racily summarized—

"A gibbet is the surest sign of a country's civilization, for to a certainty there are laws, and so sure as we see neighbours set together by the ears, there is a lawyer not far afield! One Isaac Perch—a piscator and pedagogue, whenever he would hook a trout, gives his urchins a holiday, and the grateful young rogues supply him with artificial flies manufactured from the wing feathers of Farmer Hurdle's fowls and the resplendent tail of Sir John Flambeau's pet peacock. This, in the hands of Mr. Attorney Claws, is capital larceny—and, with a trespass committed by one old woman's ducks on the grounds of another old woman—an indictment for a nuisance by a hammering brazier against an everlasting opera singer—and a humble petition from Tom Crowbar, the 'incorrigible housebreaker'—promise to bring grist to his mill. But 'it never rains but it pours'; Perch has hooked a solitary chub in the private fishpond

of Sir John Flambeau; and having been dogged to the cottage of old Frank, the father of Sally, is pounced upon by the hungry attorney, and carried off in custody. Now Sir John, though a retired tallow-chandler, and well-to-do in the world, has none of the vulgar aristocracy of wealth. He desires not to be the Dragon of Putney; and reproves Mr. Claws for his officiousness. But Claws has a friend at court in the person of my lady, a low-lived piece of city pride; who, because Sir John has spoken in civil terms to poor Sally, becomes furiously jealous; and, with the assistance of one, Captain Harpoon, whom she deceives by false representations, enters into a plot to ship her off to Russia. The Captain, an honest blunt sailor, offers her his hand and heart; and finding them pre-engaged, he enters into an explanation with old Frank, which completely discloses her ladyship's perfidy. Many years since, Frank had lost an only son at sea; the son, who was drowned in sight of port, had placed two hundred pounds of prize money in the hands of the (then) navy agent, Claws, with orders to pay it over to his poor parents. To this his friend and fellow-seaman Harpoon was witness: and happening unexpectedly to encounter the attorney, the question naturally is, has he paid it according to order? The man of law has embezzled it; and being called upon to refund principal and interest, Harry Bloom has her father's consent (for old Frank had vowed never to wed his daughter to squalid poverty) to take to wife Sally in our Alley. Mr. Jerrold has introduced some shrewd remarks on the oppression of the rich against the poor; on the power which wealth gives to do good and evil; and how much the latter preponderates. The characters of Claws, the mischief-making pettifogger, and Lady Flambeau, the high-dumptyness of dripping personified, are not

exaggerated. Perch, the rattling piscator, is pleasantly drawn—his resolution to join Captain Harpoon in a whale-fishing expedition is ultra-Waltonian. The design of this piece is to beat down pride, inhumanity, and presumption; to show that ‘a man’s a man for a’ that’ however low his estate.”¹

Isaac Perch’s defence of the “brave science” of angling is worthy of so ardent a disciple of old Walton. “Idle! talk not of the idleness which is full of health and quiet thoughts. Is it idle to be up with the day—to feel the balmy coolness of a rich May dew—to catch the coming splendour of the sun—to see the young lambs leap—to hear singing a mile above us the strong-throated lark, the spirit of the scene! Is this idle? Yes, by some ’tis called so. The sluggard who wakes half the night to lay lime-twigs for poor honesty the next day—the varlet who acknowledges no villainy on the safe side of an act of parliament—he calls me a loiterer and a time killer. Be it so, it does not spoil my fishing. Idle! why angling is in itself a system of morality!”

“The morality of jaggng a hook through a fly!” breaks in the schoolmaster’s companion.

“No,” he retorts, “but of seeing how great and golden a fish may be ensnared by glittering deceit. What is the world’s ceremony but a gaudy fly, made of silks and feathers—what mankind but the poor silly fish biting and nibbling at it? Angling! its very implements teach us lessons of morality; the rod is the

¹ George Daniel.

type of rectitude; the angler's constant companion and sermon—a box of worms.”

When Isaac Perch is told that all his pupils have been taken away and put to a new master because he himself is too lively he says, “I suppose my successor is one of those fellows who dive into the well for truth, and croak only with the frogs at the bottom.”

Sally in Our Alley at the Surrey enjoyed considerable success and was followed just a fortnight later by another piece—presumably but a brief “curtain raiser”—entitled *Gervase Skinner*, founded upon Theodore Hook's story *Penny Wise and Pound Foolish*. Particulars of this play and of its reception do not seem now recoverable, but the time of its appearance seems to have synchronized more or less closely with a quarrel between Jerrold and Elliston. Of the nature of the quarrel there is nothing known, but it may well be that the author of *Black-Eyed Susan* had come to regard his work as of the value of something more than five pounds a week, and that he chafed at the dictatorial ways of the great Lessee.

All that we know of the quarrel is as much as is given in the following letters written to Mrs. T. P. Cooke. The address from which the letters were dated was 2 Great Union Street, Borough. Somewhere about this period Douglas Jerrold was in money difficulties owing, it is believed, to his connection with a Sunday paper, presumably the *Weekly Times*, in which he had been interested. The first of the letters,

which is undated, but evidently belongs to this period, runs as follows—

“MY DEAR MADAM,—On Monday last I received, in the King’s Bench, a most arrogant letter from Mr. Elliston—he, however, knew to what place he was directing, and thought he could impose what terms he pleased. I very summarily undeceived him. He demanded that I should write the Whitsuntide piece, as coming in my present engagement—this, as I before stated, I did not conceive myself entitled to do,—and consequently refused to address myself to that drama, until Mr. Elliston stated what proposal he might have to make to me subsequently to Whitsuntide. I have no doubt that it was his wish to get the piece of me, and then bow me out of his Treasury—I receiving no recompense after its production. I added, in my letter to Mr. Elliston, that it was to me a matter of perfect indifference, whether I ever wrote another line for the Surrey Theatre—this answer he scarcely expected from the King’s Bench. I met him on Friday, and he was then all smiles and affability—his professions of friendship if possible more contemptible than his previous attempt at injustice. He is to call upon me, in the course of this week, and to settle with me for another twelve month, when, the agreement completed, I shall look practically to Mr. Cooke’s drama for Whitsuntide. I never had the most glowing opinion of the principle—to put feeling and liberality quite out of the question—of Mr. Elliston—but within these few days he has, with me, proved himself worthy of whatever rumour may have attached to him. Indeed, I fear a few days in a prison yield us a right estimation of the motives and characters of most people. Begging

you to give my compliments to Mr. C. and trusting that you are fast recovering from the effects of your late bereavement,

“ Believe me, ever truly,
“ D. JERROLD.”

The second letter is as follows—

“ MY DEAR MADAM,—I have heard of the paragraph in *The Despatch*, but had so frequently had cause to feel a contempt for the ignorant and petty spirit of that journal—that, as it appears, I was justified in treating the account of the failure of the piece in Dublin as one of the numerous falsehoods which have of late been directly or indirectly levelled at me. I am most happy to hear of Mr. C.’s success, and trust he encounters his fatigues with good health. I suppose you have heard that Elliston and I are ‘wide as the poles asunder.’ Subsequently to my last letter, I had an interview with him when he demanded of me a piece for Easter, and a piece for Mr. C.—refusing to come to any specific engagement after Whitsuntide. I at once expressed my determination to write neither piece on such an uncertain tenure, when Mr. E. (just and literal soul!) declared the engagement at an end, and from that period (about a month since) *stopped my salary*. Nay, more, he had the unblushing effrontery to tell me that I had for some time received money without making any adequate return—that he had made scarcely anything by *Black-Eyed Susan*—that other pieces of mine, *Law and Lions*, *John Overy*, etc., had kept money out of the house, and that he had gratified my vanity at the cost of £300 by the production of *Thomas à Becket*. The silence of contempt was the only fitting

answer to such assertions; and we parted. Since that period, he wrote to me, inquiring my terms for two pieces (the Whitsuntide and the benefit piece) for Mr. Cooke—I returned him my price, stipulating that the money should be paid *on delivery* of the manuscripts—this he refused to do, and here the correspondence ended—of course I do not do the piece. After the treatment I have received from Elliston I am justified in any suspicion of his probity—and I have no doubt, were I to send him a nautical piece—(and the sailor I contemplated writing, was a peculiar, and yet untouched character)—he might hand over my suggestion to another writer, and return me my MS. It is painful to have such an opinion of any man—yet, when it is considered what benefits have resulted to Elliston—indirectly and *in some measure* from myself—the condition he was in when *Black-Eyed Susan* came out—and of the return he has made me, at a period when he was aware I was struggling under difficulties, and those not the effect of extravagance or bad principles—when all these circumstances are taken into consideration I must appear wholly justified in treating him as a man incapable of the commonest principles of justice—to put liberality out of the question. I have been thus diffuse on the subject, as probably Mr. Elliston may have given another version of the causes of our rupture—however, what I have written is *the truth*—a ‘plain, unvarnished’ narrative of the case. In a few days I trust to have surmounted my present difficulties—when, having the offer of the conduct of a Sunday paper, I shall resume my former avocations, and in all probability, take a lengthened leave of the drama—I have received few available inducements to cultivate it. Begging to be remembered, and with my best wishes to Mr. Cooke—and

trusting that yourself and little girl are quite well,
I remain,

“ Yours truly,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

The “ paragraph in *The Despatch* ” was evidently the following (*Weekly Dispatch*, March 7): “ Jerrold’s nautical drama of *Black-Eyed Susan*, notwithstanding the powerful assistance afforded by the acting of T. P. Cooke as William, has utterly failed in Dublin, having been performed only five nights to indifferent houses. T. P. Cooke has in consequence returned to London.” The writer of theatrical gossip in *The Dispatch* appears to have let slip no opportunity for a dig at the dramatist about this period. During the earlier part of the same year there had been: “ Mr. Jerrold’s new musical drama of *Sally in Our Alley* has been declined by the management of Covent Garden Theatre and returned to that gentleman, who, it appears, has prevailed on Mr. Elliston to produce it forthwith at the Surrey.” Then came a chilling notice of the piece and, a week later, “ Mr. Jerrold has contradicted the statement published in our last that the opera of *Sally in Our Alley* had been *declined* by the managers of Covent Garden Theatre. We admit we were in *that* respect wrong. Will he in the same spirit of candour acknowledge the *real* cause which led to the withdrawal of the piece from the house in question ? ” And in the following month :

“Two celebrated dramatic authors are at the moment incarcerated from an inability to meet certain pecuniary considerations. The muse of one has latterly been extremely prolific.” A few months later, however, the same journal gave an enthusiastic notice of the *Mutiny at the Nore*, declaring that no playgoer “no matter where he may be located in this over-built town should fail to go and see the piece at the Pavilion.” When another dramatist, availing himself of the vogue of nautical drama which Jerrold’s most popular play had established (and even borrowing from one of Jerrold’s titles), brought out *Fifteen Years of a Sailor’s Life*, the same paper declared that it would rival *Black-Eyed Susan*—“being better.”

Another letter to Mrs. T. P. Cooke is undated, but apparently belongs to this period of struggle and success. It was written from 4 Augustus Square, Regent’s Park :

“MY DEAR MADAM,—Circumstances of rather a peculiar and pressing nature (in some measure resulting from my late difficulties) induce me (in the absence of Mr. T. P. Cooke) to solicit of you the favour of the loan of £15 until the 17th instant, when *I feel certain* of the pleasure of returning the same. I am at present employed on a piece, but as much of the success in literary matters depends upon a freedom from external annoyance, I have taken the liberty of trespassing on your kindness.

“I remain, yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

The play in question may have been that which he was writing for production for T. P. Cooke's benefit—*The Press Gang*—in which case the quarrel must either have been temporarily healed, or, as I think more likely, he wrote the play for Cooke and not for Elliston.

For something less than twelve months had Jerrold continued as dramatic writer to Elliston's establishment. The exacting, autocratic manager was not very likely to get along well with the ardent, impulsive young author. No further particulars of the quarrel are now obtainable than are contained in the above letters, but the misunderstanding was evidently a serious one, for the author of *Black-Eyed Susan* was no longer represented on the boards of the Surrey Theatre except on two occasions, once later in the same year, and once in 1831 after Elliston's death. Despite the "few available inducements" to cultivate the drama the writer did not take a lengthened leave of the stage; so far from it, indeed, that within the next five years he was to write close upon a score of plays, some of which have taken their place as among the best appreciated of his work and as distinct contributions to the dramatic literature of the century.

The success which *Black-Eyed Susan* had achieved was very naturally an inducement to the author to make further essays with the nautical drama. Just a year after *Susan* and *William* had first gladdened the hearts of thousands of theatre-goers *The Mutiny at the Nore* was produced (June 7, 1830) at the

Pavilion Theatre, and was "well acted and popular." It dealt with a historical incident well within the memory of middle-aged members of the audience, and enjoyed considerable popularity, such popularity indeed that during the second half of 1830 it was given at three different London houses, the Pavilion, where it began—and also at the Coburg and Tottenham Street Theatres.

It was but thirty-three years earlier, in 1797, that there had been a serious outbreak of mutiny in the Royal Navy at the Nore and also at Portsmouth, and therefore it must have been "like stirring living embers" to make of the theme a theatrical display. The dramatist introduces a romantic story which shows Richard Parker, the ringleader of the mutineers, as having married a woman to whom his captain was a rival suitor. That captain has submitted Parker to indignities which so rankle that, when the mutiny comes to an end, rather than surrender to him Parker shoots his officer and then submits to being taken. The play closes with his execution on board H.M.S. *Sandwich*—history had made such a happy ending as that of *Black-Eyed Susan* impossible. It is a spirited play in which the grievances which gave rise to the mutiny are set out with sympathy, and with knowledge which the dramatist had doubtless gathered during his boyish experiences in the Navy from men who may well have been concerned in the troubles of 1797.

A month after this piece had started on its

popular course the author had another nautical drama ready for the boards, and under the title of *The Press Gang; or, Archibald of the Wreck*, it was produced at the Surrey Theatre on July 5, with T. P. Cooke, the famous William, in the rôle of the hero. There remains nothing beyond the scanty press notices of the period to indicate its character; one such thus presents the plot:

“The story may be thus described: Arthur Granby, when at a very early age, was pressed on board a man-of-war, from which he deserted and joined a merchant’s crew. On his return from a long voyage, he is married to the long-wished-for object of his affection, with which incident the drama commences. As the happy pair are leaving the church, a press gang enter and capture the despairing husband, and carry him to their ship, which proves to be the identical one that he had deserted from many years before. Arthur is condemned to undergo the usual punishment of a deserter; when, just as it is going to be inflicted, it is discovered that Granby, who had been kidnapped from his parents when a child, is a peer of the realm, and therefore not liable to be pressed. This drama is written by a very superior minor dramatist, Mr. Jerrold, and the incidents are truly dramatic, and wrought up so artfully, as to produce the deepest sympathy and attention. The plot is rather irregular, and we cannot speak very highly of the *dénouement*, which is far too abrupt and improbable.”

This was presumably the benefit piece of which the author had written to the actor’s

wife, and a truce appears to have been made with Elliston.

These earlier years of Douglas Jerrold's career as writer, when he was beginning to win an acknowledged position for himself among the dramatists and journalists of the day, are chiefly marked, so far as anything is now ascertainable, by the production of new plays. Letters of any interest and other materials are very scanty during this period. Jerrold was working hard both as journalist and playwright on his way to an accredited position.

On December 16, 1830, a new piece by Douglas Jerrold—"a gentleman who has distinguished himself by writing for the minor theatres in a style far superior to any they have of late years been honoured with"¹—was produced at the Adelphi Theatre, in the form of a romantic drama in two acts entitled *The Devil's Ducat ; or, the Gift of Mammon*. This was new in more ways than one; it is written in blank verse and is more ambitious in scope and treatment than the general run of the dramas written for the audiences of the Coburg and Surrey Theatres; is, indeed, on quite different lines, and in its differing way no less ambitious a dramatic venture than the *Thomas à Becket* of twelve months earlier.

Yet, in those days of many new plays and constant changing of the theatrical bills a fresh piece was quite likely to be overlooked

¹ The *Dramatic Gazette*, December 1830.

whatever its merits, for in a periodical of the time (*The Tatler*) George Daniel apologized for not having noticed its production, having concluded it to be “one of the flaring Bartholomew Fair things that are so common at the minor theatres.” However, after visiting the Adelphi he made ample amends in the warmth of his encomium and incidentally referred to the legend on which the dramatist based his story. The author thus replied to the reference :

“MR. TATLER,—‘Pases,’ in whose birth, parentage and education, you have shown so kind an interest, is really, as you surmise, to be found in the Latinity of Erasmus. Le Clerk gives his authority (omitted in the bill) as follows—*Erasmus in Adagiis Suidas*.

“I fear I cannot honestly receive the praise for much invention in the incident of Grillo’s robbing Nibbio in the confession scene—that circumstance having been suggested to me by Robertson, who in his *History of Charles V*, speaks of Petzel, a Dominican, sent forth to all ‘indulgences’ vending an absolution of theft to a couple of marauders, who afterwards (doubtless to try the virtues of the document) emptied the pockets of their spiritual physician.

“I have thought it but candid to say thus much, leaving it to your judgment whether it be of sufficient importance to interest the readers of *The Tatler*.

“I am, yours,

“Respectfully,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

After giving this letter the critic commented :
“Mr. Jerrold ought not to suffer for his

modesty, in speaking as he does of the scene in question. The idea is borrowed; but the pleasant details are his own; and the humorous impudence of the theft, openly and at the same instant committed upon the absolver, beats the after-thought of the two marauders. It puts a new zest upon the old joke of Autolycus."

The idea of this romantic drama is taken from a story of Pases, an ancient magician who made for himself a coin that whenever it was spent returned to him, and in the play it is shown how such a boomerang-like disk returns but to damage its unfortunate possessor. When the play was printed, three or four months after its production, in Cumberland's edition of acting plays, it was "embellished" with a portrait of Mr. O. Smith in the character of Mammon in kingly costume, and was prefaced by George Daniel who, ever ready to acknowledge the originality of the dramatist, has a pretty severe hit at the dramatic depredators who in the varying capacities of translator, adapter and poacher, were flourishing at the time. "Mr. Jerrold," said the critic, "does not *borrow* from the French—neither does he poach in the unfrequented fields of the drama and realize the fable of the ass in the lion's skin. A hint from an old ballad or book is sufficient—he is content with an apple, without stripping the whole tree." Another critic said: "He is not one of those 'recreant bards' who glean the vile refuse of a Gallic stage. All his dramas are true English, from top to

toe: so that his very failures are entitled to respect.”

The Devil's Ducat is an ambitious effort and it is so both in its conception and in its style. It aims at bringing home to those who witness its performance some shrewd lessons as to the value of the possession of ill-gotten wealth. There is something fascinating about the possession of a coin which, use it as often as we may for the purpose of purchasing that which we desire, is yet never actually spent. This drama is notable as being the only acted one by Douglas Jerrold written in blank verse. He was a great reader of the Elizabethan dramatists, whose rich stores during his early manhood were being drawn attention to by the loving ministrations of Charles Lamb.

The scene opens in the country near Naples, and two brothers, Astolfo and Leandro, are discovered. They have been robbed of all their wealth by a rascally old lawyer, one Nibbio, who, not content with ruining them, is also anxious to gain as his wife the beautiful young Sabina, who is plighted to Astolfo. Of the two brothers Astolfo is passionate, rebellious, while Leandro, with something of Christian fortitude, having been robbed of his patrimony, consoles himself philosophically by saying:

“Truly, contentment is the poor man's bank.
Old Nibbio hath robbed us of our land—
What then? will sour looks bring it back again?

Astolfo. Brother,

In this world pleasures are not showered on us ;
They must be bought.

Leandro. Nay, but listen—

Astolfo. Silence, or thou'lt drive me mad—I tell
thee,

Robbed of our estate, we are made outcasts—
Thrown on the world to swell the train of those,
Who for ready smiles and subtle adulation,
Give raiment, food, and lodging.

Leandro. Astolfo, thou think'st too much of our
loss—

Gold doth not work such miracles.

Astolfo. Not ! look abroad—

Doth it not give honour to the worthless,
Strength to the weak, beauty to withered age,
And wisdom to the fool?—As the world runs,
A devil with a purse wins more regard
Than angels empty handed."

To the brothers enters Grillo, a whilom thief,
and now servant to Sabina's father. He
delivers a note to Astolfo, in which the ruined
youth is told that he is to think no longer of
the girl as his affianced bride. Astolfo with
righteous indignation breaks out :

“ Sabina !—I remember nothing earlier
Than her sweet face—she, to whom next heaven,
I looked for hope, is barred me.—Why is this ?
What have I done ?—Is my name degraded ?
Is my blood tainted, my mind changed ?—Am I not
In heart and conscience the same Astolfo
As of yesterday ?—What, then, my fault ? 'tis this—
Far worse than sacrilege, or sudden leprosy—
I am a beggar !
Proclaim the wealthy knave, cut-throat and cheat,

Still crowds, as deaf as adders, crawl and bow
To him. Denounce him poor—as though the plague
Were at his bones, he stands alone.”

The spirit of Mammon appears to the desperate man who has declared that he is one who “dares be villain but dares not be poor.” Mammon comes as an old and haggard man, with a face expressive of the most sullen apathy. Astolfo recoils in horror from the dire apparition with the exclamation, “What art thou?”

“*Mammon.* Thine idol, come, bow to me.

Astolfo. Thou art a fiend, set on to snare my soul!
I do repent me.

Mammon. Fool!

Religion’s in the heart, not in the knee!
Already thou hast worshipped me.

Astolfo. Thy name!

Mammon. Mammon—

Thou dost smile. ’Tis a name that makes men laugh.
Though death be aiming at them. Thou’dst be mine?

Astolfo. No: thy looks are terrible, thy words—

Mammon. So, then, we can change both.

*(He casts away his mask and ragged clothing
and appears a mass of gold, with a golden
crown and sceptre.)*

Start not, signor: I am earth’s harlequin;
I build up palaces, put slaves on thrones,
Erase the spots from treason’s stained coat,
Manacle warm youth to shivering age,
Re-christen fools most wise and learned men,
And trumpet villains, honest.”

Mammon presents Astolfo with the marvellous unspendable ducat, and the young man

goes off and bargains with Nibbio and Botta to win back his bride; it costs him six thousand ducats, but what of that—with Mammon at his back it matters not how much he spends. He is about to wed the willing Sabina when Nibbio rushes in with his empty box, the ducats having all disappeared. Mammon has of course kept the word of promise to the ear to break it to the hope and, his juggling with the fiend made manifest, the wretched Astolfo finds himself in a condition far worse than that of poverty. The ducat is seized and crossed by the monks, but returns at once to its miserable owner. He is to be burnt for his dealings with the unholy one; but Mammon is nothing if not a refined torturer, and he rescues his dupe from prison. Astolfo, with the faithful Sabina, would fly, but none will take his money. He encounters Botta with a bag of gold, and is struggling to possess himself of it when Mammon comes on and kills the old man, making Astolfo appear the murderer. Astolfo has discovered the depth of the villainy by which he and his brother have been cheated of their all by Botta and Nibbio; and in the closing scene strangles the latter before being carried off by Mammon.

The play has marked lessons in it, lessons which they who run can scarcely fail to read. Here, as in other of his writings, the dramatist is not sparing of scathing remarks on those who live by litigation, and some of the best points in the dialogue are directed against the grasping

lawyer, the hypocritical churchman. The old man Nibbio, disappointed of a young bride, becomes a Franciscan monk. Says Grillo: "I always thought his knavery so great, nothing, save a cowl, could cover it." Grillo, the old-time pickpocket, meets Nibbio in his new monkish garb, and salutes him:

"*Grillo*. Save you, father—will you give a poor reprobate your blessing?

Nibbio. Bless thee, my son.

Grillo. Father, I—I—bless me again, good father.

Nibbio. What, Grillo? Humph! art thou sincere, my son?

Grillo. Sincere! Could I jest with the wonder of Naples? Why thou hast been planted in a convent only a few days, and thou art already a full-blown saint. Bless me again!

Nibbio. There! go thy ways—mend thy life: thou hast been a knave—but the viler the rogue, the lovelier the convert.

Grillo. In truth, father, I would ease my conscience. I would tell thee all my sins.

Nibbio. All!

Grillo. Nay, there's time 'tween this and midnight. Oh, I've been a horrid knave! Had every one of my sins a neck, Italy would want rope to hang 'em. But I'll tell thee a few of my lighter faults. In Venice, I killed a merchant—

Nibbio. Well.

Grillo. In Padua, I set fire to a house—

Nibbio. Well.

Grillo. In Venice, I broke the hearts of three widows, and robbed sixteen orphans—

Nibbio. Well, well, if thou'rt contrite, there's hope.

Grillo. In Verona, I ruined a lawyer—no, that comes by-and-by, among my good acts. In Genoa, I turned Jew; in Bologna, I eat pork again! In Palermo, I broke a bank; and at Leghorn I sank a ship, with her crew and passengers. Is there hope yet?

Nibbio. Go on, go on. Thou mayst not yet despair.

Grillo. Here, in Naples, I stole three peaches from a convent garden.

Nibbio. Horrible, horrible.

Grillo. (*Sidling close to Nibbio*) I have done worse than that.

Nibbio. Impossible! it cannot be.

Grillo. Yes; it's my last crime.

Nibbio. I tremble to listen—what was thy last crime?

Grillo. (*Stealing a bag of money from Nibbio's girdle*) My last crime?

Nibbio. Ay; thy last crime.

Grillo. I stole some money from a monk.

Nibbio. Thou'rt a lost wretch—no hope—a lost wretch!

Grillo. I would even now return some part of the gold to the church.

Nibbio. 'Tis the only way to whiten thyself. How many pieces didst thou steal?

Grillo. At a rough guess—for gentlemen of my trade rarely count—(*glancing at the bag*) some fifty pieces.

Nibbio. I would not lose a soul: bring me twenty, and thou shalt have my prayers.

Grillo. Twenty!

Nibbio. To mend thy conscience.

Grillo. Mend it! Some of thy brethren would sell me a new one for half the money.

Nibbio. Well, well; if thou dost really repent, ten may serve.

Grillo. Say five, and it's a bargain. Come, or I'll take my custom to another workman. Tinker my conscience well, and I'll give five.

Nibbio. I do almost commit a sin, letting thee off so cheaply. Say six—well, well, five!

Grillo. (*Taking money from the bag unseen by Nibbio, and presenting it to him*) There's thy money.

Nibbio. And there's my blessing!

Grillo. Now, thou dost pardon me the theft?

Nibbio. I do, I do.

Grillo. As for the man I robbed—

Nibbio. The loss will exercise his patience. Thou hast told me all thy crimes?

Grillo. All I can remember. Now for my virtues—nay, I'll soon despatch them: marriage is a virtue—

Nibbio. It may be.

Grillo. Then I am virtuous: I've married six wives, and am promised to five more."

How excellently in this scene the confessed rogue works upon the cupidity of the notary monk, and how ready we are to forgive him his sins for the golden humour with which he tells of them, and for the delicious way in which he plays upon the would-be clever Nibbio. *The Devil's Ducat* "passed current in London, stamped with general applause"—O. Smith as Mammon, and Buckstone as Grillo meeting with special approval.

An undated letter addressed to a friend named H. Whittle—an actor or manager—appears to belong to this year. It may have been written in the early part of it, when the quarrel with Elliston was in progress, though the reference to the *Devil's Ducat* suggests

that it might have been written later. If, as is indicated, the arrangement with Elliston was still in force when the letter was written, then the *Devil's Ducat* must have been completed many months before it was staged. The letter runs as follows :

“ MY DEAR WHITTLE,—I yesterday saw Mr. E[lliston]’s factotum, and, as I wished if possible to do the business relative to the MS. smoothly, sounded him as to Mr. E.’s disposition should it be done elsewhere. His opinion was that he would *instantly litigate*, and as this might embroil you and myself in disagreeable proceedings it will probably be as well to defer the piece until your next Ben., by which time I may be enabled to obtain amicably what might now only lead to annoyance. Besides, his daughter died but two days ago, and—although I owe him nothing in point of courtesy—I shouldn’t like to create him new uneasiness at such a period. With the *Devil's Ducat* DO WHAT YOU PLEASE. I shall see you to-morrow.

“ Believe me, dear Whittle,

“ Your ever truly,

“ D. J.”

It is possible that the dramatist’s correspondent was connected with the Adelphi Theatre, as it was there that *The Devil's Ducat* made its appearance. That Whittle was evidently a familiar friend the terms of this note sufficiently indicate, but I have found no further mention of him. Another friend made at this time was John Abraham Heraud, a journalist and minor poet of the period. It

was in this year that Heraud published a volume of poems the title of which gave Jerrold the opportunity for a jest. The poet meeting the dramatist asked, "Have you seen my *Descent into Hell?*" "No," retorted the latter, "but I should like to." It was Heraud, too, who was delightfully satirized a dozen years later in what is accepted as Thackeray's first contribution to *Punch*, "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee."

CHAPTER VI

“THE RENT DAY” AND EARLY COMEDY

1831—1832

THE quarrel that set Jerrold and Elliston wide as the poles asunder, left the dramatist free to place his work elsewhere than at the Surrey, and also probably left him freer for journalism. That the varied work which he had done for the stage had made his name known beyond the circle of friends and acquaintances, is to be seen from such occasional mention in the periodicals of the time as troubled to note the fact that plays had authors. Among men of kindred tastes and work he was taking his place as a keen-witted and ready-tongued companion, who was always welcome. His brilliant conversational wit was readily recognized, and his bonhomie won him many friends among those who knew him as a man of real earnestness of spirit, of great kindness and of keen sensibility, one whose incisive remarks were frequently made for the wit of the thing rather than with any cruel intent. The man to whom the stroke was delivered would know whether it was a rapier thrust or a mere brilliant touch—a hit, a palpable hit—with a fencing foil. There were

some who looked askance at him, who feared the point of a weapon of which they lacked the mastery, but they were probably those who had given good cause for some specially biting bit of sarcasm, some rankling point of wit.

It was somewhat about this time that a number of young men, of whom Jerrold was one, banded themselves into the Mulberry Club. One of the prime movers in the scheme appears to have been William Godwin's very promising son, who about two years later was untimely cut off by cholera.¹ The club met at first once a week at "a house of entertainment" in Vinegar Yard, Drury Lane, and had a special dinner on that significant anniversary, the twenty-third of April. Members read original papers or poems relating only to Shakespeare, and, as many artists belonged to the club, they exhibited sketches of some event connected with the poet's life. A number of the youthful aspirants who foregathered at this lowly place of meeting were destined in after years to win for themselves notable niches in the temple of fame. The

¹ William Godwin the Elder in a preface to his son's novel *Transfusion* said of the Mulberries: "It was part of the plan of this club that each member should in rotation produce and read before his fellows, on certain select occasions, an original essay on any subject he might think proper, provided it bore some reference to the object of the club. Accordingly two of the essays produced by him [William Godwin the Younger] were, the first entitled *On Shakespeare's Knowledge of His Own Greatness*, and the second *A Dissertation on the Dramatic Unities*, which were after his death published in the *Court Magazine*."

three friends, Douglas Jerrold, Laman Blanchard and Kenny Meadows, all of them ardent worshippers at the shrine of the great poet, were, of course, of the coterie; Charles Dickens, Serjeant Talfourd, Thackeray, Charles Knight, Charles and Thomas Landseer, Frank Stone, George Cattermole, Daniel Mac-lise, "Bob" Keeley, and many other familiar names, figured in the roll of membership either in those early years or later, when the name had been changed from the Mulberry to the Shakespeare Club, and a more important meeting place was fixed upon.¹

All the papers and poems which were read, and the sketches which were shown, at the "Mulberry" meetings, were kept together in a book called *Mulberry Leaves*. This volume on the expiry of the club remained in the hands of William Elton, an actor member who was drowned in 1843 while journeying from Edinburgh to London. The book, which presumably remained with his family, has not been traceable. Only a portion of the volume's contents was ever published, and it may be hoped that the entire work is still in existence, and will some day be made public, for it would be an extremely interesting souvenir of the earlier years and writings of a remarkable circle of talented young men. Many of Douglas Jer-

¹ It was evidently a member of the club who edited *Bell's Weekly Magazine* in 1834, for in the third number is given a conversation between the editor and his friends (signed ϕ) in which the editor says "shall we smoke a cigar *more majorum*, at the Mulberry Club."

rold's "leaves" were published in various periodicals, and three of them are probably to be recognized in his collected writings.¹ Of his verse contributions to the club, but one example remains in the form of a song on Shakespeare's Crab Tree.² Many years afterwards, speaking of the old circle, Douglas Jerrold said that it was impossible to look back to that "society of kindred thoughts and sympathizing hopes without a sweetened memory—without the touches of an old affection." In so looking back he was often moved to sing again in a soft sweet voice, the Crab-tree song which he had written in old "Mulberry" days.

It was probably in the Mulberry circle that some one hit upon a novel method of testing the members' knowledge of the works of Shakespeare. A word was to be given to each person by his table neighbour, and this he was to define at once with an apposite quotation from the poet. On its becoming Jerrold's turn to respond, his neighbour probably plumed himself upon having set a poser, for he suggested the seemingly hopeless word "treadmill." Instantly came the wit's definition of it in Lear's words, "Down—thou climbing sorrow." This readiness of wit seems to have been an early characteristic, for it is one of the first things insisted upon by those of the

¹ *Shakespeare at Bankside, Shakespeare in China* and *The Epitaph of Sir Hugh Evans in Cakes and Ale*.

² *The Essays of Douglas Jerrold*, Introduction.

dramatist's friends who have left any account of their intercourse with him. It may reasonably be doubted whether Sydney Smith is altogether in the right when he says that wit may be mastered by patient study, that in effect we may all become in our own way Talleyrands, Sheridans, Sydney Smiths or Jerrols, yet we cannot doubt that, given the mental alertness on which true wit depends, the incessant exercise of it makes it seem yet more remarkably ready. Douglas Jerrold as a sociable and convivial companion and as a dramatist was in a double manner keeping his talent always polished and always in play.

The Devil's Ducat had been produced at the Adelphi a fortnight before Christmas, 1830; on the following Easter Monday, April 4, 1831, leaving the romantic drama in verse, Jerrold was represented on the boards of the Pavilion Theatre by an original domestic drama in three acts called *Martha Willis, the Servant Maid*. The story is laid nearly a century before the time of its production, and its characters are grouped more or less closely around one, Nunky Gruel, a miserly and hypocritical pawnbroker. This man is a notorious receiver of stolen goods, and encourages the young men who come within his influence to "make money" by fair means or foul. The hero, Walter Speed, is a highwayman who is "wanted" for stopping a coach and a former lover of Martha Willis, a country girl who has entered service in London with the hope that

she may encounter him. Martha and several others are placed in Newgate for robbery and are sentenced to death; she refusing to say that which by freeing her would make Speed's guilt known. Speed, who has given the girl the stolen ring which brings about her condemnation, determines to work what reparation he may; he kills the usurer and receiver of stolen goods who has been his undoing, and disguised gains admission to Newgate, where making himself known, he clears the girl, takes poison, and dies. The play, which is perhaps more notable for the pointed dialogue than for any strong interest in the highly sensational story, enjoyed such success as to warrant its revival more than once during the next few years.

Slug, who professes to be a reformed character, has a passage at arms with Scarlet, the guard of the Derby Highflyer:

“*Scarlet.* Reformed, eh? and what's become of your friend, Nat Fell?

Slug. My friend? Why, didn't he and two others stop your coach on the Derby road?

Scarlet. Yes! and if my blunderbuss hadn't missed fire, he'd have had lead enough in his head for an alderman. So you've dissolved partnership, have you?

Slug. I tell you, Master Scarlet, he was never a friend of mine; you see, he was new from the country, and a fine dashing fellow with money in his pocket, when I first knew him—then he went to gaming houses, and then——

Scarlet. I know—it is but a handsbreadth from a dice box to a pistol. Gambler and pickpocket! Why, they back one another like the head and tail of a penny piece! toss, and 'tis a chance which comes uppermost. And so Nat Fell——

Slug. Ay, that's his name here, though when he's at home at Chesterfield, he's called Walter Speed. Well, he, I tell you, has gone bad enough—but as for me, I'm a respectable professional man—I'm a lawyer, and an honest man.

Scarlet. Ay, that is, you only rob according to act of Parliament. Well, good-day.

Slug. Good-day. Master Scarlet, you'll take nothing?

Scarlet. No, and I'll see you don't.

Slug. Ha! you will have your jest. But good-day to you! You're a fine, open, worthy, (*aside*) sneaking, pettifogging rascal. [*Exit.*

Scarlet. Turned honest! Then black's turned white."

The usurer, gloating over "the last of his lordship's plate," as he puts it with his hoard, murmurs to himself, "Humph! a lord without gold and silver is marvellously like a peacock without his feathers." Says a convicted thief to the mother who had taught him thievery: "When parents give life, they give a curse if they do not teach that which makes life happy."

Jerrold was at about this period devoting much of his time to journalism. When Thomas Wakley—celebrated as founder of the *Lancet*, and for many years as coroner for Middlesex—started a journal called the *Ballot* during the

great Reform agitation, he chose Douglas Jerrold to assist him in the triple capacity of sub-editor, reviewer and dramatic critic. Later, when the *Ballot* was merged in the *Examiner*, Jerrold continued for a while as sub-editor under Albany Fonblanque. It was about this time, too, that Jerrold became a contributor of original essays to the *Athenæum* and also is reported to have written a very violent political pamphlet which was suppressed. The actual subject of this pamphlet it now seems impossible to trace, although from the fact of its having been written when the question of Reform was agitating men's minds to an unusual degree it may be imagined that it, too, dealt with the topical matter. It is something characteristic of the man's ardent, outspoken nature that what was apparently his first essay in political writing should so shock the sensibilities of the powers that were that they should require its withdrawal from circulation. When his pen was further trained in the mastery of sarcasm and invective it was destined to become a very real power in the sphere of political journalism.

In the summer of 1831, T. P. Cooke, the actor who, as William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, had made so decided a hit, contemplated—it may be presumed in the rôle of sailor—giving a series of "Entertainments" in the manner which Charles Mathews and Frederick Henry Yates had made popular. With this aim in view he communicated with the author of

the piece which had been the means of so considerably adding to his reputation, inquiring if he would undertake the literary part of such an "Entertainment." The terms which he offered did not apparently err on the side of munificence, as may be gathered from Jerrold's reply, dated from 4, Augustus Square, Regent's Park, on June 23:

"MY DEAR COOKE,—I feel assured that I should not be able to do anything worthy of you, or creditable to myself, on the terms you propose. The work would employ me—to do it as I should wish, and to make it something like a standard thing—some weeks. I could not do it—forming as it must a whole night's entertainment, under £100. Moncrieff and Peake have each had £300 off Mathews for his *At Homes*. It is not, I hope, too much vanity in me to rate myself at about one-third the value of either of those gentlemen. I am aware that the *At Homes* are established things, and that yours would, from its very novelty, be something of a speculation, yet to give that speculation any chance of success it is necessary that great attention should be directed to it, which attention I could not pay under the terms I have above specified."

Cooke's scheme, apparently, did not come to anything, or if it did, he must have found a more amenable writer to prepare his "book," for Jerrold turned his attention to the writing of a comic drama, by which he should once more seek to gain the suffrages of a Drury Lane audience.

On December 8, 1831, *The Bride of Ludgate*

was duly produced at that theatre, and proved a better example of finished comedy than the author's previous essays; it may indeed be looked upon as the first of that series of brilliant dialogue plays which ends with *A Heart of Gold* more than twenty years later. Two years had passed since the failure of *The Witchfinder*, and in the interval the author had strengthened his position and acquired a greater sureness of touch; the new piece was distinctly successful, despite the fact that in a fit of pique Farren, who was cast for one of the leading characters, "*declined the part the day before the performance.*" As "D. G." put it, assuredly the fate of the dramatist *is* hard, seeing that the attitude of one of the "puppets" may destroy the chances of a piece which represents six months of work. The critic in his preface to Cumberland's edition of this play waxed wroth, in capitals and italics, over this defection of one of the actors—"To destroy the hopes of an author is a matter of small moment to the MIMIC! to whom *all* feelings are alike. What is his success to HIM, even though the decent comforts of a family depend on it? The puffed and pampered player lacks even the small charity of the *Fine Gentleman* in Garrick's Prologue—

"Let the poor devil *eat*,—allow him *that!*" The poor devil may be *damned* in a *double* sense, ere *he* abate one inch of his dignity—unless to cry quits with some *stipendiary hack*, some *penny-a-line man*, or *brother buffoon.*"

Among the other "wrongs" of dramatists which galled Jerrold at various times was the censorship exercised by the Examiner of Plays. George Colman—the worthy who then wielded this autocratic power—refused to license the *Bride of Ludgate* for performance because the plot required King Charles to wear the disguise of a clergyman, and the habit of a lawyer had lamely to be substituted. But of this trouble with the Examiner we shall see something more in the account of the next of the plays.

The story of *The Bride of Ludgate* is laid in the Restoration days, when the Merry Monarch and his licentious courtiers were ready to engage in all manner of amorous escapades. The King and his boon companion Sedley have gone to a certain vintner's in disguise, on the pretence of dealing in wines, but in reality to make the acquaintance of the merchant's pretty young wife. There they find themselves let in for a series of amusing adventures. Andrew Shekel, a rich old money-lender of Ludgate, is about to marry a young girl, Melissa, whose affections have previously been engaged by young Mapleton, the son of a Cromwellian. After a series of amusing scenes in which Mapleton is half married to Melissa's maid, and the King is arrested as a traitor by one of his own boon companions, Charles in royal fashion puts all right by restoring Mapleton the family estates which had been confiscated, by insisting upon his marrying Melissa forthwith, while he further

rewards the disappointed old Shekel with a promise of knighthood. The play sets forth a pretty story and has much of sparkling dialogue in it. "Our loyalty," says one of the swaggerers to the disguised King, "is clear as crystal." "Is it so!" exclaims Charles in an aside, "I'll try my diamonds on it." After his bribery has seemed successful, when the exposé takes place, he turns and says, "La! dost not blush to take a bribe?" to receive the disarming retort, "La, sire, 'twould have looked ill to blush to take, when your Majesty didn't blush to offer."

Here is a scrap of dialogue between the disguised King and Sedley in the house of the vintner:

Charles. Why, Sedley, surely some one hath threatened you with matrimony, you seem so dull of late.

Sedley. In truth, I begin to reflect that——

Charles. Then you are a lost man; for reflection to a rake is fatal as singing to a swan. Why, you are so irrevocably lost that even your virtues, could you fileh any, would undo the world.

Sedley. The world is in no danger; yet, how?

Charles. How! Why, your sobriety would shut up the taverns, your frugality would ruin the money-lenders, and your chastity make a desert of Westminster Hall.

Sedley. But then the virtue that would rejoice at my conversion——

Charles. She'd have little reason; for virtue herself, with you for an admirer, would lose her reputation. Ha! here returns our watchdog, the valorous

Captain Mouth. That fellow looks as warlike, yet, withal's as harmless as an unloaded field-piece.

Sedley. Nay, the captain has seen service.

Charles. So have the chamberlains at the Blue Boar. He has the constitutional courage of a post—he'll not run away. When science thought of gunpowder, she thought of such fellows as he to expend it on."

Captain Mouth is a delightful swaggerer, and his gasconading about the court, repeated in his presence by the vintner to the disguised King, is part of a diverting scene. In story, situation and dialogue taken together, the playwright had up to this time done nothing better than this piece, which is written in the very spirit of the drama of the period in which its scenes are set.

The beginning of 1832 was notable in Jerrold's life for two reasons, for it was in January that he started on its brief career a comico-satirical paper called *Punch in London*, prototype of the *Punch* which ten years later was to come and stay, and it was signalized by the production of the second most popular of his plays. *Punch in London*, which appeared on January 14, was not a pretentious journal, but it was clear and outspoken in its attacks on the triple giants, snobbery, toadyism and humbug. The new paper was undoubtedly suggested by the production, a month earlier, of *Figaro in London*, under the editorship of Gilbert Abbot à Beckett; it was not in any sense a close imitator of its more successful rival, although somewhat obviously an "after-

thought.” Because of this à Beckett’s paper has been referred to as the prototype of the *Punch* with which we are all now familiar; the connection is, however, more apparent than real. *Punch in London* came out not so much as a periodical as an individual, and addressed his audience in very much the same way as his successor was to do twenty years later. He came out frankly as a critic who would “spare nobody,” and had some lively comment on men and affairs. Jerrold was connected with it but for the first few of the not many weeks of its existence, and as I have dealt with his work on it already in an earlier volume¹ it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here. It may be said that in his contributions, in the very opening address, the editor insisted upon “the purpose” which inspired his pen.

Just when Douglas Jerrold was severing his connection with *Punch in London* the curtain went up at Drury Lane, on January 25, on a new play in which that “purpose” was put in another and perhaps more widely telling fashion. The success of the comedy of the preceding month had made the management alive to the fact that in their new writer they had an original dramatist of some power. He was, indeed, justifying his explosive statement of a few years earlier, “I will come into this theatre as an original dramatist, or not at all.” But if the *Bride of Ludgate* with its air of old-world comedy proved popular, how

¹ *Douglas Jerrold and Punch* (Macmillan & Co.), 1910.



Douglas Jerrold

DOUGLAS JERROLD

*From a print first published in 1836 as "from a picture in the possession
of Douglas Jerrold"*

much more likely to enlist the sympathetic admiration of a Drury Lane audience was a piece, a "domestic" drama, based on the homely subject of *The Rent Day*. Sir David Wilkie's celebrated picture of the same name gave the dramatist all the hint that he wanted, and the result was a play which, while it was marked with all his peculiar brilliance of dialogue, had a closer grip on life, was more sustainedly of human interest, than many other of his plays. That *The Rent Day*—described as a "fine specimen of the slandered dramatic genius of the age"—was not, however, written for Drury Lane is to be seen from the following paragraph which affords a curious sidelight on the ways of "star" actors, and is an interesting item in the history of Jerrold's connection with the stage. It appeared in the first number of *The English Figaro*, another of the numerous imitators of *Figaro in London*.

"Jerrold's domestic drama in two acts, entitled *The Rent Day*, is to be produced at Drury Lane next week. This is the same piece which was lately withdrawn from the Adelphi Theatre after it had been put in rehearsal. The Bashaw Yates wanted the drama to be denuded of half its fair proportions and likewise permission from the author to allow the comic part to be played *ad libitum*, because the tom fool of Yates's company forsooth 'had a bad study.' To this proposal, Mr. Jerrold very properly demurred, not wishing to father all the obscenities which the said tom fool might perpetrate in the course

of an evening, and straightway took the piece to Drury Lane, where it was instantly accepted, and underlined in the bills the next day.¹

“But here another obstacle presented itself to mar the fair prospects of the author in the person of William—a gentleman drawing forty pounds a week from the treasury, thirty for himself and ten for Mrs. Faucit Farren—who objected to play the part assigned to him, because (impertinent coxcomb!) he did not consider it to be ‘the best part in the piece!’ The affair was not arranged when we went to press. Really it is high time such fellows as these should be taught that they are dependent upon the *public* and not the public upon *them*.”

The drama duly appeared on January 25, and William Farren was *not* in the cast! The piece achieved an instant and marked success which must have been galling indeed to the actor who had withdrawn in a fit of temper. “Bashaw Yates” too must have felt particularly sore over the matter, for after compelling the author to take his play from the Adelphi boards, he had later on to flatter it by mounting an imitation! Whether the

¹ Another of the journals of the day, *The Theatrical Observer*, recorded that *The Rent Day* was partly accepted at the Adelphi, but withdrawn by the author on account of some caprice of the manager, or his wife, and proved to Drury Lane “a great card”; while another said, “The managers of the Adelphi, with an acumen which argues well for their sagacity, could see but little merit in this piece, and actually allowed the author to withdraw it from their house, because, with the spirit which becomes a man of genius, he would not consent for the sake of a few paltry pounds to have his piece hacked about to suit the whims and fancies of one of the major mountebanks of this most magisterial minor.”

writer of the paragraph had confused Farren's defection at the last moment from the cast of *The Bride of Ludgate*, or whether the actor really struck for a second time, cannot be decided. Certainly he did not appear in either of Jerrold's plays.

When *The Rent Day* was sent to George Colman as Examiner of Plays, the following communication was returned—two days before the first performance :

“January 23, 1832.

“Please to omit the following underlined words in the representation of the drama called *The Rent Day*.

ACT I

Scene I. ‘The blessed little babes, God bless ’em!’

Scene III. ‘Heaven be kind to us, for I’ve almost lost all other hope.’

Ditto. ‘Damn him.’

Scene IV. ‘Damn business.’ ‘No, don’t damn business; I’m very drunk, but I can’t damn business—it’s profane.’

Ditto. ‘Isn’t that an angel?’ ‘I can’t tell; I’ve not been used to such company.’

Scene V. ‘Oh, Martin, husband, for the love of heaven!’

Ditto. ‘Heaven help us, heaven help us!’

ACT II

Scene III. ‘Heaven forgive you, can you speak of it?’ ‘I leave you, and may heaven pardon and protect you!’

Scene last. 'Farmer, neighbours, heaven bless you—let the landlord take all the rest.'

Ditto. 'They have now the money, and heaven prosper it with them.'

"G. COLMAN.

"*To the Manager, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.*"

And George Colman—before his official appointment—had a reputation as a humorist! Apropos of this it may be mentioned that the Examiner had struck out all the "Damme's" that occurred in a play called *Married and Single* before endorsing it for performance, "because such language was immoral." Elliston, acknowledging the licence, wrote:

"DEAR COLMAN,—'Damn me, if it isn't the brazier.'
'Damn the traveller do I see coming to the Red Cow.'
'Damn this fellow.' 'Sooner be damned than dig.'

"Yours,

"R. W. ELLISTON."

The point of this was, I believe, that all these expetive sentences were taken from Colman's own dramatic writings! ¹

When *The Rent Day*—in which John Pritt Harley, who had made his debut in Samuel Jerrold's little Cranbrook theatre in 1806, had a notable part—was in active rehearsal at Drury Lane, the author one day had a pleasant surprise on going behind the scenes at the

¹ I have the licence granted to William Robert Copeland in 1855 to perform a three-act drama *Our Victories in the Crimea*, but it is carefully endorsed by the then Examiner, William Bodham Donne, "Omit all oaths in representation and the words 'Lord,' 'God,' etc."!

theatre, for there he met once more Clarkson Stanfield, the painter, whom he had not seen since they parted, nearly twenty years earlier, on board the *Namur*, the one a boy officer, the other a "foremast man." The meeting again was the renewing of a close friendship which lasted throughout life. Stanfield was at the time engaged in preparing scenery for his whilom shipmate's new "domestic drama."

The play met with rapturous applause, the clever setting of the opening scene as an exact reproduction of Wilkie's popular picture being greeted with considerable enthusiasm. In connection with this it may not be inappropriate to quote the late W. P. Frith, the popular painter of "The Derby," who wrote:

"Wilkie's 'Rent Day' was said to have inspired the play of that name by Douglas Jerrold; however that may have been, it is certain that the famous picture was represented by living actors on the stage at a special moment [the raising of the curtain on the first act] during the performance of the piece. Mulready, always Wilkie's intimate friend, told me of the glee with which the artist informed him of the compliment to be paid to his picture.

"'We'll just go together the first night, ye know; I've been at the playhouse putting the people in the positions, and it's just wonderfully like ma picture.'

"The two painters secured central places in the dress circle; the curtain was drawn up, and an exact representation of the picture disclosed.¹

¹ The fifth scene of the first act similarly disclosed a representation of Wilkie's companion picture, "Dis-training for Rent."

“ ‘Not only,’ said Mulready to me, ‘did they get the groups right, but they had managed to select people really like those in the picture. I was delighted,’ said he, ‘and turning to Wilkie to express my pleasure, I saw the tears running down his face. ‘What’s the matter? Why, it’s admirable! Surely you are satisfied?’ ”

“ ‘Well, ye see,’ said Wilkie, ‘I feel it’s such an honour, it’s just quite overcome me to think that a picture of mine should be treated like that; and did ye hear how the people clapped, man? It’s varra gratifying.’ ”¹

The announcement that Jerrold’s play was suggested by Wilkie’s picture did not by any means enlist the sympathies of the critics on its behalf. The dramatist was told, by those kind friends on the press who are ever ready to offer advice, that he might easily have found a better subject on which to employ his talents. “When hackneyed engravings are taken for the groundwork of pieces at our national theatres it is high time for some kind of reform in the drama.” Gilbert Abbot à Beckett, who thus found fault with the play before its production, was among its most hearty supporters when he had witnessed the performance. So considerable was the success that Morris, the manager of the Haymarket, coolly appropriated it, his theatre being then in a bad way, and the loose system of dramatic copyright, or no-copyright, permitting such piracy. Imitation, a popular proverb tells us, is the sincerest form of

¹ *Further Reminiscences*, by W. P. Frith.

flattery, and Jerrold's drama was duly flattered by dramatists with a plentiful lack of originality. The opening scene of the play was received with such rapturous applause that Buckstone, more successful as a play actor than as a playwright, modelled a piece which he called *The Forgery* on two other of Wilkie's paintings, "Reading the Will" and "The Village Politicians." Beyond the great success of *The Rent Day* these early "living pictures" did not meet with any sustained popular approbation. At the time that it was produced it may be added the same author's dramas of *Martha Willis* and *Ambrose Gwinnett* were drawing "good houses" in Paris.

Described as a domestic drama in two acts, this play may well have been suggested by the popular painting by David Wilkie of the same name—the painting which was utilized as the setting for the opening scene. Though described as a domestic drama it is also something of a social satire on the times when landlords revelled in London gaming-houses on wealth wrung by harsh or unjust stewards from a suffering tenantry. The steward of one, Grantley, is an ex-convict who, having feathered his nest, is preparing to decamp. The ill-used tenant is Martin Heywood, whose father and grandfather had for sixty years been regular with rent, tax and tithe, but Martin has fallen on evil days, and cannot face "Rent Day" with the imperturbability of full pockets. Grantley, having

written to his steward for more money, visits his estate incognito to see how it will be raised, and is thus able to unmask the villainy of Crumbs and to ensure the happy ending demanded.

Says one of the characters: "Fault! poverty's no crime;" to be countered with "Isn't it? well, it's so like I don't know the difference." When the bailiff says he'll have the law of Toby for slander he is told, "The character that needs law to mend it is hardly worth the tinkering," and on being threatened with violence if he doesn't go he says, "I give you warning! Remember I'm a sworn appraiser," to receive the retort, "You're the better judge for what you ought to be knocked down." With its ready dialogue, and its touches of social satire, *The Rent Day* has also a tender story of love and misunderstanding, with highly dramatic situations, where the distracted farmer finds—thanks to the villainy of a couple of scoundrels—his wife in a seemingly compromising position and where, struggling with the broker for possession of his grandfather's chair, Martin discovers in that piece of furniture a hoard that suffices to make him stand clear again with the world, while Grantley appears on the scene in his proper person to straighten the other matter, to dismiss the scoundrel steward—who has but been seeking vengeance for an earlier wrong—and to present Martin with the freehold of the farm.

One great theatrical "hit" now means far more profit to a playwright than did fifty such successes in the first half of the nineteenth century. In illustration of the small returns which were made then it is worth mentioning that I possess the document, dated March 8, 1832, in which for the magnificent sum of ten pounds Douglas Jerrold disposed of "the perpetual copyright of *The Rent Day*, a domestic drama" to one, Mr. C. Chapple.¹ Of course, the dramatist had reaped the profit of the play's successful first run, which, as runs went then, was a long one. If, however, the author did not make any large amount of pecuniary gain out of his successful piece it certainly added to his fame as an original writer. The nature of the success may be gauged from the wording of the Drury Lane programme for February 2. It is headed "Fifth Night of the New Drama," and after the cast of *The*

¹ Chapple duly published it at three shillings, and a second edition was immediately called for at the same price. Later the author appears to have re-acquired his interest in the published play, for I have seen a letter addressed to Mitchell of Drury Lane, dated, presumably from the publisher's.

"October 18,

"Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

"DEAR SIR,—If you play *The Rent Day* again, it will much oblige me if you will let the subjoined paragraph appear in the bill.

"Yours truly,

"D. JERROLD.

"A new Edition of the drama of *The Rent Day* (price one shilling) is published and may be had of J. Miller, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and at the Theatre."

Rent Day, and the following farce, and before particulars of the Pantomime, is an interpolated passage printed in red with a typographical digit pointing to the words :

“ A Complete Overflow ! *The Rent Day!* Having been stamped, by the judgment of the public, as one of the best productions on the list of the acting Drama, and the intense interest its different scenes develop, being nightly received with the greatest applause, by crowded and fashionable audiences, will be performed this Evening, on Saturday, Tuesday and Wednesday next; and four times a week until further notice.”

CHAPTER VII

STATE OF THE DRAMA—"NELL GWYNNE"—THE
MULBERRY CLUB

1832—1834

FOR nearly a dozen years—during which he had produced about three dozen plays—Douglas Jerrold had now been a dramatist, and the rewards of the profession were by no means encouraging. He found it necessary to double the parts of journalist and writer for the magazines with that of playwright, and that doubling of parts gave him opportunities for saying what he thought, for delivering himself of what he felt to be truth on many questions, and incidentally for standing forth boldly and claiming the "rights" which belonged to him and his colleagues as dramatists. In the following May his indignation at the wrongs of the writer for the English stage found vent in a bitter essay, in which he pointed out what those wrongs were, and how they might be ameliorated. Jerrold had unquestionably suffered in more ways than one over the miserable condition of things which then obtained. He had been underpaid by Davidge and Elliston, he had had his pieces "pirated" or "borrowed" in the most open manner, and had no redress.

All that he could do was to express with bitter sarcasm some of the wrath that he felt, and thus it was that he wrote :

“ Were we asked what profession promised, with the greatest show of success, to form a practical philosopher, we should on the instant make reply, ‘ The calling of an English dramatist.’ There is in his case such a fine adaptation of the means to the end that we cannot conceive how, especially if he be very successful, the dramatist can avoid becoming a first form scholar in the academy of the stoics. The daily lessons set for him to con are decked with that ‘ consummate flavour ’ of wisdom, patience; they preach to him meekness under indigence; continual labour with scanty and uncertain reward; quiescence under open spoliation; satisfaction to see others garner the harvest he has sown; with at least the glorious certainty of that noble indigence lauded by philosophers and practised by the saints—poverty, stark-naked poverty, with grey hairs; an old age exulting in its forlornness! If, after these goodly lessons, whipped into him with daily birch, he become no philosopher, then is all stoicism the fraud of knaves, and even patience but a word of two syllables. But we are convinced of the efficacy of the system. English dramatists *are* stoics, and not in a speculative sense, but in the hard practical meaning of the term. Time has hallowed their claim to the proud distinction, it is consecrated to them by the base coats of their prime, and the tatters of their old age; not only endured without complaint, but enjoyed as ‘ their charter.’ ” ¹

¹ *New Monthly Magazine*, May 1832, the article being in part a review of a pamphlet *On Theatrical Emancipation and the Rights of Dramatists*, by Thomas James Thackeray.

During this year a Select Committee of the House of Commons inquired into the subject of dramatic literature, and Douglas Jerrold was examined as a witness before it on June 29, a position which we may be sure he took with considerable pleasure. In a footnote to the preface of the first edition of *Thomas à Becket* he had written :

“ It must, unfortunately, be allowed that the present period is not the most auspicious to the production of original dramas : when every other species of literature, save that of the theatre, is protected by legislative enactments from unprincipled piracy, it is not to be expected that many writers will be found to expose their plays, as Alfred hung up his golden bracelets, in sheer contempt of robbers. In England the bantlings of the dramatist are a proscribed race ; they come under a kind of outlawry—‘ whosoever findeth them may slay them.’ Whilst such is the case, it will be in vain to hope for an improvement in the modern drama.”

The Select Committee consisted of twenty-four members of Parliament—including Lord John Russell, Lytton Bulwer and Alderman Waithman—sat from June 13 to July 12, and duly presented its report during the latter month.

Davidge in his evidence said : “ Authors who have been successful at the patent theatres are the authors at the minor theatres. The author of *The Rent Day*, which has been instanced as the most profitable production at Drury Lane, was the author of a number

of pieces at the Coburg." He also said that the largest sum he had ever given to an author for a new piece was fifty pounds—his average price was twenty!

Jerrold in his replies to the questions addressed to him said that his *Black-Eyed Susan* had been acted over 400 nights during its first year—150 nights at the Surrey, 100 at Sadlers' Wells, 100 at the Pavilion, 30 nights at Covent Garden and at other houses such as the West London and the Olympic; and that all that he had received was £50 from the Surrey manager and £10 by selling the copyright of the play—together precisely the amount which T. P. Cooke had received for six nights' acting at Covent Garden. He further explained that the selling of the copyright for what it would fetch was rendered necessary as there was a dealer in new plays who provided provincial managers with copies of London successes at two pounds a play, by means of which, as he said, the authors were represented by mere skeletons of their dramas, and were, in fact, not only robbed, but murdered. His payment for *The Rent Day*, he said, was £150 paid on the twenty-fifth night of performance. When asked as to what remedy he would propose, he suggested that plays should be placed under the ordinary copyright law (which then protected an author's work for but twenty-eight years), and that no manager should be free to represent any piece without its author's consent. As he said, had he received but

“the humble terms of five shillings a night” for every performance of *Black-Eyed Susan* throughout the country, it would have amounted to a great sum to him.

Jerrold had indeed had several quarrels with actors and managers, his quick impulsive spirit could but ill brook the condescending attention of men who were greatly profiting by his work. With Davidge and Elliston he had quarrelled, and with good cause; personal pique on the part of a principal performer was mainly instrumental in wrecking the promise of his first appearance in the national theatre; when a drama of his was successful at one house it was coolly appropriated at another (and by a manager who refused his original work!). Yet again had he cause of complaint, as we find in the following very emphatic letter written somewhere about this period to T. P. Cooke. It was addressed from 6, Seymour Terrace, Little Chelsea, whither the Jerrold family had removed some time after September 21, 1831, for when on that date Mary Ann Jerrold was born the home was still Augustus Square.

“DEAR SIR,—I saw Mr. Davidge last night. His statement ran as follows: He had no idea of playing *Jack Dolphin* until suggested by you, who handed him over a list of pieces (which he showed me) with that drama among them. That you informed him the piece was *Mr. Farrell's*, and took upon yourself to ask Mr. F.'s permission to act it. Moreover, Mr. Davidge informed me that he had seen bills of

the Southampton and Portsmouth theatres, in which the piece (acted in by you) was advertised. If all this be true, I quite acquit Mr. Davidge. In my letter to Mr. Hammond,¹ in answer to a wish expressed by you to have the piece to play in your provincial circuit, I stated as definitely and as impressively as my imperfect powers of language enabled me, that if the drama were acted by you (for there was then no other MS. save that in the possession of Mr. Hammond) I expected a due remuneration. I expect so still. I have written quite enough for the high profits and popularity of others, with but the most paltry pecuniary advantages to myself. (I got sixty pounds by *Black-Eyed Susan* !)

“ Mr. Hammond informed me, in answer to my letter, that you refused my offer of the MS. of *Jack Dolphin* for ten pounds. Well and good. How did the piece get to Portsmouth and Southampton? And now the piece is introduced to the Coburg at your express recommendation, backed by a statement that it is *Mr. Farrell's property*, when, but a week or two previous to my leaving town, I had stated that Mr. F. had, certainly, a right to play the piece at his own theatre, but none whatever to transfer that right to another. Mr. Farrell's testimony, however, seems of a higher value than mine : he purchased the right to *play the piece*, I only wrote the drama.

“ Even now, if a man may be indulged with even the shadow of a direction over his own property, I protest against the representation of *Jack Dolphin* at the Coburg Theatre : and if it has been performed on your introduction, and by you, at any provincial theatre, save the Liver, I expect the sum of ten

¹ His brother-in-law, W. J. Hammond.

pounds. I endeavour to write, as I feel on this subject, strongly and unequivocally, putting aside all false delicacy, in the assertion of my right to the profits of my own labour, which, God knows! have hitherto held a fearful disproportion to the profits of those availing themselves of it. This (the contemplated representation at the Coburg) is a new infringement on the rights, or rather it is a new addition to the wrongs of dramatists; on which I shall not hesitate to descant more publicly and in more set terms. I wish—though it matters little to the question—that the drama was a little more worthy of this discussion; for with all its lately discovered capabilities, I cannot but think that that which was so very contemptible in comparison to the *Blue Anchor* some year or so ago, should now be thought worthy of Portsmouth, Southampton, etc. In conclusion, if you have performed this drama (*Jack Dolphin*) at any other provincial theatre, or contemplate so doing (I had much rather it was not acted at all) I beg to press my claim of ten pounds.

“ I am, etc., etc.,

“ D. JERROLD.”

Of the earlier and later fortunes of *Jack Dolphin* I have not been able to ascertain anything.

On the last day of June 1832, *The Golden Calf* was produced at the New Strand Theatre, and met with considerable success—“declined, owing to strong family prejudices” by Morris of the Haymarket, it “drew an abundance of worshippers to the Strand.” Its chief motive was an insistence upon much of the hollowness of the life of the day, of the awful sacrifices

that were then (as now) made "to keep up appearances."

This was a comedy "ridiculing with pleasant humour and caustic satire the blind homage that wealth and high station receive from their votaries," exposing that dangerous weakness by which for every pound of his income a man would lead the world to believe that he has five. A young man, Mountney, has inherited from his father, a retired tradesman, a comfortable fortune, but he falls in with the thriftless Lord Tares and other expensive companions, is led to card-playing and runs rapidly through his patrimony. His wife, taught by his example, has also taken to play, and a dramatic scene shows us the husband asking his wife to return to him the diamonds he had given her on her wedding day, for he had staked and lost even them. The wife, in as desperate a strait as her husband, has pledged the jewels to raise money wherewith to meet a "debt of honour" incurred at the card table. But for this added complication the play may remind the reader somewhat of some of the scenes in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, Mountney being another, but a desponding instead of a buoyantly cheerful, Charles Surface. The nearest likeness in the two plays, a likeness that cannot fail to have struck playgoers familiar with Sheridan's masterpiece, is that like another uncle from Calcutta an old friend of Mountney's turns up and saves him from ruin after making plain

to him the villainy of Tares and the hollow friendship of those who had gathered about him as long as he could be made to serve their selfish ends. The story of the comedy is interesting, and some of the characters are well defined, especially the grasping money-lender Pinchbeck and his intolerable wife with her perennial desire to get asked into "society." The dialogue is sparkling throughout, as may be gathered from the following passages; Mountney, to raise money so that he may keep up his London state a little longer, has sold his father's country house, and the purchaser, through Pinchbeck, is Chrystal, the "little nabob" of *The Golden Calf*.

"*Pinch.* I have sold Multiplication Lodge this morning.

Echo. Bravo! what ass has bought it?

Chrys. (Advancing and bowing). The ass before you.

Echo. Ten million pardons! I—I—My dear sir, if 'twill be any satisfaction, you may call me an ass in return.

Chrys. Sir, it is quite unnecessary. Though, were I to retaliate, I should rather call you a zebra!

Echo. Why a zebra?

Chrys. (Coolly surveying him.) A mere ass in a fine coat.

Echo. Ha! ha! Why, as his lordship says, this is the age of coats. We have had the age of gold, the age of silver, and other substantial ages: they are obsolete: people care not for the reality, so they can secure the show. The present age is the age of—of—in fact, it wants a comprehensive title.

Chrys. 'Tis easily found. For when men, making a sign of wealth the highest standard of opinion, gull each other with a show of substance :—when, to keep up the general trick, folly and vice strike hands, and misery too often seals the compact ;—when men sell their hearts for tinsel ;—when they honour not so much the mind's nobility as jingling syllables ;—when 'tis not asked, ' what can a man do ? '—but ' what seems he to possess ? '—not ' what does he know ? ' but ' where does he live ? '—and when this passion for appearance stays not with some hundred gilded nondescripts, but like one general social blight is at this moment found in every rank, in every walk, —for a verity we may not call the present age the age of gold or of silver ; but, of all ages else, the AGE OF OUTSIDES !

Echo. That's satire ; confess—isn't it satire ?

Chrys. It may be ; for fools and rascals give that name to truth."

Other passages may be noted—" An impostor ! why how can there be a rich impostor ? The wolf who killed in sheep's clothing would never have been hanged had he masqueraded in a golden fleece."

" A humble jackdaw out of debt is much better than a peacock that owes for its feathers."

" I'm sure, talk of taxes—the greatest tax of all is the tax of appearance."

" Oh, sir, I know what a writ is," says Pinchbeck's poor servant Rags to the benefactor Chrystal, and then he immediately goes on to define it as follows in words, as it has been said, about as complimentary as Johnson's

famous definition of an exciseman : “ What is it not, sir ? It’s a rope to bind a man’s hands, and then a tongue that tells him to work when bound ; it’s a curious and learned invention to squeeze blood from a stone ; horrible words, writ on the devil’s skin to conjure with ; an undertaker that buries alive ; a cannibal that swallows whole ; a thing to take away the use of legs ; a stake, driven through the body of a live man to hold him to one place ; a great cage with invisible bars ; a monster that eats wives and babes ; a—a honey sop for rascals, a deadly drug for honest folks ! ”

The Golden Calf was successful, if not so generally popular as some of the author’s earlier and less-finished pieces, and Douglas Jerrold, while continuing his work as journalist and contributor to periodicals, turned his attention to yet another play for the stage of Old Drury. *The Rent Day* had proved so popular a few months earlier that it was resolved that the new piece should also be of that class of “ domestic drama ” which Jerrold called “ a poor thing, but mine own.” On October 6, the play was duly produced under the title of *The Factory Girl*. From the accounts given in the contemporary press it appears to have been most unjustly and inexplicably condemned, but so effectually that the management did not venture beyond a second representation.

Said *Figaro in London*, a paper by no means uniformly laudatory of Jerrold’s work :

“A new domestic drama by Mr. Jerrold, the talented author of *The Rent Day*, was produced under the title of *The Factory Girl*, on Saturday last at Drury Lane Theatre. Writers like Mr. Jerrold deserve our gratitude as well as our admiration, for their aim is not merely to amuse, but to plead, through the medium of the stage, the cause of the poor and oppressed classes of society. Such is the author's object in *The Factory Girl*, in which he has drawn with lamentable truth the picture of a weaver's lot, which is to be the slave of the inhuman system of overworking in English factories and too often a victim of the petty tyranny of those who are placed in authority over him. We are not fond of detailing plots, and we therefore give none in the present instance: the story has interest and incident which would with the general good writing through the piece and the quaint satirical humour of Harley's part, have carried off *The Factory Girl* triumphantly had it not been in some degree marred by the dénouement, in which letters were pulled out of bosoms, a labourer finds a brother in a rich merchant, and an extensive relationship is discovered among the principal characters. This comfortable arrangement for a happy ending naturally excited a smile which gave to the ill-natured a plea for sending forth their venomous breath in loud blackguard shouts of 'off'—when Harley announced the piece for repetition; this uncalled-for opposition is always caught up eagerly by the gang of disappointed would-be writers for the stage who rush in by shoals at half-price for a damn into the two or one shilling gallery. The poor half-starved dirty devils mustered rather strong on Saturday night, and the hoot of the hungry and splenetic writers was for a few moments audible. Some lovers of justice among the

gods, seeing the object of the envious opponents of the piece, thought right partially to clear the gallery for a division, and the gang of would-be Shakespeares or Sheridans were speedily deposited *extra* the theatre."

No more of the piece is known than is given in newspaper passages such as this, the lack of invention apparently shown in the dénouement, added to the factious opposition, was sufficient effectually to damn the piece, and after a couple of successes, the sensitive dramatist suffered his second repulse within the walls of Drury. He could, however, point to the triumph achieved by *The Rent Day*, with the full confidence that he could and would yet do better still.

Another contemporary critic may, however, fittingly be heard in defence of this play written with a high purpose. The critic, like the dramatist, was considerably in advance of his particular generation, and recognized that the stage might well be a true civilizing and moral agent:

"‘We are gratified,’ says the anonymous author, ‘at perceiving that the choice of this powerful dramatist’s subjects invariably involves some principle or system. In his *Rent Day* the mischievous effects of absenteeism were strikingly developed; and disfigure our manufacturing system are portrayed with all the force and skill of a masterly hand. If all authors had the same object in view, the stage would, in comparison to the pulpit, as a director of

morals, be what practice is to theory. With the highest veneration and regard to that venerable body, we should then be enabled to dispense with the whole bench of Bishops without feeling it as a national calamity.’”

Before taking leave of *The Factory Girl*, we may glance at the following note appended by Douglas Jerrold to a sketch of *The Factory Child*, written a few years later :

“ It is now six years since the writer of this paper essayed a drama, the purpose of which was an appeal to public sympathy in the cause of the Factory Children : the drama was very summarily condemned ; cruelly maimed the first night, and mortally killed on its second representation. The subject of the piece ‘ was low, distressing.’ The truth is, it was not then *la mode* to affect an interest for the ‘ coarse and vulgar ’ details of human life ; and the author suffered because he was two or three years *before the fashion*. This circumstance, however, is only now alluded to, that the writer of the present paper may not be supposed to have unseemingly entered upon ground taken within these few days by a lady writer, but as only claiming the right to return to a subject he had before, in adverse times, adventured on.”

In his next dramatic essay—*Nell Gwynne*—“ perhaps the most delightful play he ever penned ”—Douglas Jerrold wrote the first of those brilliant comedies of dialogue which are preserved in his collected works. The *Golden Calf* was an attempt in the same line of writing, but despite the many good points in it it was

not so uniformly successful as the historical comedy in two acts which, after being declined by Madame Vestris for the Haymarket, was produced at Covent Garden Theatre on January 9, 1853, under the title of *Nell Gwynne ; or, The Prologue*. A chance perusal of the valuable *Roscius Anglicanus* by "old Downes the prompter," the author acknowledges, first suggested the comedy. A few months after the production of the piece, when issuing it in printed form, he wrote an introduction, in which he sketched the life of Nell Gwynne and printed that curious document, her will. From this introduction the following passages will show the motive of the dramatist, and justify the view which he took of the character of the notorious Nell :

"Whilst we may safely reject as unfounded gossip many of the stories associated with the name of Nell Gwynne, we cannot refuse belief to the various proofs of kindheartedness, liberality and—taking into consideration her subsequent power to do harm—absolute goodness of a woman mingling—(if we may believe a passage in Pepys)—from her earliest years in the most depraved scenes of a most dissolute age. The life of Nell Gwynne, from the time of her connection with Charles the Second, to that of her death, proved that error had been forced upon her by circumstances, rather than indulged from choice. It was under this impression that the present little comedy was undertaken : under this conviction an attempt has been made to show some glimpses of the 'silver lining' of a character, to whose influence over an unprincipled voluptuary, we owe a national

asylum for veteran soldiers, and whose brightness shines with the most amiable lustre in many actions of her life, and in the last disposal of her worldly effects. . . . All the characters in the comedy, with but two exceptions, and allowing the story that the first lover of Nell was really an old lawyer, figured in the time of Charles the Second. For the introduction of Orange Moll (so inimitably acted by Mr. Keeley) the author pleads the authority of Pepys. . . . The incident of the king supping at a tavern with Nell, and finding himself without money to defray the bill, is variously related in the *Chroniques Scandaleuses* of his ' merry ' and selfish days."

The story is that Nell, persecuted by an old lawyer, runs away and tries to get on to the stage. She has an interview with Betterton of the Duke's Theatre, but is not approved, and in despair determines to sell oranges about Drury Lane Theatre. There her pretty face and ready wit soon attract custom away from " Orange Moll," and other rival sellers. There, too, Nell encounters again the King (incognito) and his boon companion Berkeley, and is also seen by the managers, who invite her to go on the stage that evening and speak the prologue in a great hat—larger than that attracting attention at the opposition house.

In one of the various encounters between Nell and King Charles (who is masquerading as a City mercer), she tells him of a dream in which a forecast is given of her future life, and in the course of the dialogue sings one of those graceful little lyrics which are intro-

duced here and there in Jerrold's dramatic writings :

“ *Nell.* Now or never; listen.—I dreamt that I was riding in a fine golden coach with the king.

Charles. With the king !

Nell. You know, we do dream such strange things—with the king. Well, the coach stopped: when there came up a poor soldier without any legs and arms, and of a sudden he held out his hand——

Charles. What ! without any arms ?

Nell. You know it was only in a dream.

Charles. Yes, Nelly; but you ought to dream according to anatomy.

Nell. I say, he held out his hand; and, telling us that he had no place to lay his old gray head upon, not a morsel of bread to put into his mouth, he begged for charity, while the tears came peeping into the corners of his eyes.

Charles. Well ?

Nell. I turned round to the king—for, bless you, I was altogether at my ease, no more afraid of him than I am of you—and I said, ‘ Charles !——’

Charles. Charles !

Nell. ‘ Is it not a shame to let your old soldiers carry about their scars as witnesses of their king's forgetfulness?—is it not cruel that those who for your sake——’

(Unconsciously laying her hand upon the arm of Charles.)

Charles. For my sake ?

Nell. You know, I am supposing you the king.

Charles. Oh, aye, aye !

Nell. ‘ Who for your sake have left some of their limbs in a strange country, should have no resting-place for the limbs they have in their own ? ’

Charles. I see the end : the king relieved the soldier, and then you awoke ?

Nell. No, I didn't ; for I thought the coach went on towards Chelsea, and there——

Charles. Well, what happened at Chelsea ?

Nell. There, I thought I saw a beautiful building suddenly grow up from the earth ; and going in and coming out of it, just like so many bees, heaps of old soldiers, with their long red coats, and three-corner hats, and some with their dear wooden legs, and all with their rough faces looking so happy and contented—that, when I looked and thought it was all my work, I felt as if I could have kissed every one of 'em round !

Charles. When it came to that of course you awoke ?

Nell. No, I didn't—not until I saw a place with my picture hanging out for a sign. My head for a sign ! what do you think of that ?

Charles. Think ?—I can't think of the sign with the living lips before me. (*She avoids him.*) Nay, thou'rt a wild and beautiful bird.

Nell. Aye, he must be a cunning fowler who cages me.

Charles. I can make the bars of gold.

Nell. If you'd hold the surer, better bend one of the gold bars into a ring. No other cage, no other net ; a little fable hath taught me wisdom. You shall hear it.

“ ‘ Little bird, little bird, have a care ;
 Thus whisper'd a lark to her child ;
 ‘ See the fowler is spreading his snare,
 What makes ye thus noisy and wild ? ’
 ‘ Good mother,’ the silly one cried,
 Conceitedly trimming its wing,—

Of good and ill all character is made ;
 The good accept—the rest cast into shade.
 Of some we'd show (if so our hopes might draw)
 The moral amber, with nor grub nor straw ;
 Would take away th' unseemly gnats and flies,
 And keep the prettiness that glads all eyes.
 This our design : if granted, may I ask
 Your hands and wishes for th' attempted task ? ”

Douglas Jerrold succeeded in making a very attractive heroine out of King Charles's notorious mistress without any reference to her further career other than the prophecy in the passage quoted.

The play was highly successful. In the *Theatrical Observer* for January 21, 1833, it was announced : “ We hear that M. Laporte is so much elated with the attraction of *Nell Gwynne* that he has commissioned Mr. Jerrold to write a sequel in which Nell will be introduced as *la maitresse titrée* of the King, and as forming one of the most attractive objects of the voluptuous Court of Charles. . . . *Nell Gwynne* was offered to Vestris for £100, which she thought more than the lady was worth, but Laporte, being a better judge of *female* attractions, gave a higher price, and has gained a great profit by his bargain ; the receipts of the last six nights have amounted to £2250.” The sequel play, it may be added, was never written.¹

¹ In the *Casket*, a periodical of the time, the plays of the period were turned into stories and given week by week. Jerrold's *Rent Day*, *Devil's Ducat* and *Nell Gwynne*, were all flattered in this (to the author) unprofitable fashion.

Nell Gwynne was most cordially welcomed by some of the leading literary critics of the day. John Forster and Thomas Noon Talfourd were at any rate among those who warmly recognized the power and wit of the rising dramatist. For it was with these comedies, written in the first half of the 'thirties, that Jerrold earned his right to the foremost position among the writers for the English stage for the next twenty years. Talfourd, Mary Russell Mitford and Sheridan Knowles were, it is true, then among the dramatists of the day, but all of them together did not produce so many successful pieces as did the author of *Nell Gwynne*. Each of these writers might be better in some one respect than their younger colleague, but none was his equal for sustained brilliancy of dialogue; Sheridan Knowles was the only one who with Jerrold might bear comparison with the writers for the Restoration stage.

With all his work Douglas Jerrold was not too busy to be at the service of others, and his kindly offices were requisitioned by the fine old veteran William Godwin, as the following note from the famous author of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* sufficiently testifies.

“ No. 13, New Palace Yard,

“ Saturday, June 1 [1833].

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I was in great hope, after having broken the ice in Gower Place, that we should be favoured with a visit from you without ceremony. You have, doubtless, heard of the revolution (whether

to call it for good or ill I scarcely know) which has taken place in my fortune, and has brought me to this spot.¹ At any rate we are considerably nearer to each other. I am sure you have not forgotten what passed between us respecting my poor son's drama of *The Sleeping Philosopher*.² You conceived you had provided a reception for it at the Olympic next season, and were so good as to offer to make a certain alteration in it. I and his mother are both anxious about its fate, and to see something done respecting it. Could you spare an idle hour to consult on the subject? And for that purpose would you have the goodness early to take a chop with us here? Say Tuesday next, if convenient to you, at four o'clock.

“Meanwhile, believe me, dear Sir,

“Very sincerely yours,

“WILLIAM GODWIN.”

The drama by William Godwin the Younger does not seem to have been produced, despite his friend's interest.

Jerrold's eldest son, William Blanchard, has recorded how he vividly remembered—he was but ten years of age when Godwin died—accompanying his father to the dark rooms in the New Palace Yard, which were occupied by Godwin and his wife, whom he described as “an old vivacious lady and an old gentleman”:

¹ Godwin had been appointed by Lord Grey to the sinecure post of yeoman usher of the Exchequer, a post which was shortly after abolished, though Godwin was permitted to retain it to the end of his life (April 7, 1836).

² Godwin the Younger was one of Jerrold's friends of the Mulberry Club (see p. 178).

“ My father was most anxious that I should remember them; and I do remember well that he appeared to bear a strong regard for them, and to talk of them more warmly than he spoke of ordinary men and women. One anecdote connected with them he used to relate again and again with great unction. I should first observe that my father was a very skilled whistler—a skill which he would practise frequently. He had always some ballad fresh in his memory; and you might know when he was stirring on summer mornings, by hearing his dressing-room window drawn sharply up (he did everything sharply) and a tender, small voice now pour forth, evidently in the fulness of enjoyment—

“ Sweet is the ship that under sail
Spreads her white bosom to the gale;

and now break into a note clear as a lark's; luxuriate in rapid twists and turns of melody; then suddenly stop, as the door was cast open, to cry aloud, ‘ Now, boys, boys! not up yet?’ Well, one morning he called on the Godwins, and was kept for some minutes waiting in their drawing-room. It was irresistible—he could never think of these things. Whistle in a lady's drawing-room! The languid eyes of Belgravia turn upwards. Still he did whistle—not only *pianissimo* but *fortissimo*, with variations enough to satisfy the most ambitious of thrushes. Suddenly good little Mrs. Godwin gently opened the door, paused still—not seen by the performer—to catch the dying notes of the air, and then, coming up to her visitor, startled him with the request made in all seriousness, ‘ You couldn't whistle that again, could you?’ ”

Dramas or comedies from the dramatist's pen were being produced about this period at

the rate of two a year. In January, as we have seen, *Nell Gwynne* made her bow at Covent Garden. On July 17, a successor was brought out at the Haymarket in the form of a two-act comedy entitled the *Housekeeper*. The author had by this time found his chief strength as a dramatist to lie in comedy-dialogue, and the new piece was a further proof of his mastery of this form of dramatic art. In plot and character, it is complained by some critics, Douglas Jerrold was deficient as a dramatist, and although the criticism may be sound when applied to some of the plays it is quite false as applied to the whole body of his work for the stage. The *Housekeeper* is distinctly a proof of the contrary, for the interest in the development of the story is well sustained throughout, and the characterization is particularly good. The scene is set in the year 1722, at a time when certain supporters of the Pretender hoped to make an attempt in his cause that might be favourable, while people were still suffering from the shock of the bursting of the South Sea Bubble. The conspiracy was, however, crushed in embryo, but it led to the exiling of Bishop Atterbury and to one Christopher Layer, a barrister, being executed. Layer, as the author pointed out, is the only real person introduced into the comedy, "the other characters, with the incidents in which they are concerned, being the invention of the writer, who has 'taken out' the allowed dramatic

licence, to fix on an historical circumstance as the means of developing imaginary events." It is a pretty, romantic story that is revealed, showing the way in which a studious recluse in a quiet house near St. James's Park is to be exploited for their own purposes by the conspirators. This recluse, Sidney Maynard, has a servant, a respectable middle-aged woman, coming from the country. The sudden prospect of matrimony makes that woman stay in Derbyshire and send young Sophy Hawes instead, while Sophy is persuaded by Felicia (Maynard's cousin) to allow her to take the place at first. Sophy's lover, Simon Box, is in London, and resents her going as housekeeper to young Maynard, and thus falls in with Felicia's scheme; while Maynard's one-time boon companions seek to win him from that purpose of solitude and study which it is the design of one Father Oliver and his fellow conspirators to strengthen for their own ends.

The arrival of Felicia as housekeeper in place of the widow excites the curiosity—and later the warmer feelings—of Maynard, and the suspicions of Father Oliver, a number of whose confederates are to meet unknown to the master in Maynard's house. The same evening his whilom boon companions decide to have a housewarming there and send in a case of wine for the purpose. Thus are brought about some striking situations, leading up to the culminating one when—thanks to the quick-wittedness of Felicia, the conspirators are

unmasked, soldiers arrive, and Maynard finds who his mysterious housekeeper is, and concludes "if she looks yes, why, then, all will be welcome to my housewarming, for here, behold my wife—the best HOUSEKEEPER!"

In his time of disillusionment Maynard has declared that in study and wisdom are the only lasting good: "Glory! 'tis but a bubble blown from blood. Law! a spider's wisdom! and politics! the statesman ponders and plans, winning nothing certain but ingratitude and indigestion. Whilst for woman, we hunt a wildfire and vow it is a star." The inebriated Bin says to the girls who have told him that there is "not such a thing in the house" as a corkscrew, that they are not to shun good advice—"I feel I speak as a father; for if I'd twenty marrying daughters these should be my solemn words to each: 'Never be without a corkscrew!'"

The piece was well received both by the public and the critics, and enjoyed a good run. *Nell Gwynne*, produced six months earlier, was being acted in London at the same time as its successor, and the author determined upon publishing these two plays. They are referred to in the following letters to Forster:

"6, *Seymour Terrace, Little Chelsea,*
"July 20, 1833.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—You must allow me the pleasure of a cordial acknowledgement of your kindness. Though I feel you have, on the present as on a former occasion, thrown what are the best

points into the strongest relief, by softening down the worst, it would be a poor affectation in me to question such partiality, as, indeed, its very existence is a matter of, I hope, something better on my part than mere self-complacency. We can none, or at least very few, escape the influence of personal acquaintance. It is, then, a subject of honest pleasure to the obliged when such knowledge, *on some minds*, is the liberal interpreter of good intentions, and the charitable apologist of all deficiencies.

“Yours, my dear Forster,

“Very truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“P.S.—*Nell* and the *Housekeeper* will be in print on Monday—when I will forward them to you. About a fortnight’s careful work will finish *Beau Nash*: which is then to be produced immediately.”

“Friday, Seymour Terrace, Little Chelsea,

“Aug. 1833.

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—Will you favour me with a few lines on my two pieces in the *True Sun*? I ask for nothing more than a mere signification of their being in print—and being the first of a series to be published by our society. Hearing that you are again attached to the paper induces me to solicit this added favour at your hands.

“Yours ever truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“I publish these dramas on my own account; and of course all publicity—the more especially as they are now being played helps the sale. I have been expecting—what I now ask of *you*—this past fortnight.”

“Our Society” referred to in these letters was the Dramatic Authors’ Society, the inception of which is mentioned in the following note to Joseph Lunn, of Craven Street, Strand, a dramatic writer who enjoyed some popularity in the first half of the nineteenth century :

“*Thursday, 6, Seymour Terrace, Little Chelsea,*
“*July 13, 1833.*”

“DEAR LUNN,—I am requested to write to ask your attendance at the Garrick *Tavern*, Bow Street, at the hour of one (precisely) on Monday, to consider certain resolutions to be entered upon to secure us the fruits of the Dramatic Authors’ Art—and a law. Knowles, Serle, Buckstone, Dance, Oliver (?)¹ and self, were present yesterday, but it was resolved to postpone any final settlement until everybody—who would wish to secure himself—for it is only by acting *in a society*, that the managers are to be fought—should meet. *Hinc*—this letter. At one precisely.

“Yours truly,
“D. JERROLD.”

The next letter refers to a much-discussed project as to establishing a third patent play-house.

¹ James Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862) as author of *The Hunchback* and *The Love Chase*, was a dramatist of lasting fame; Thomas James Serle, an actor and playwright of some repute in his day, secretary to Macready at Drury Lane, was godfather of Douglas Jerrold’s youngest son, Thomas Serle Jerrold, who was an infant nine days old when this letter was written; John Baldwin Buckstone (1802–1879) was another playwriting actor who enjoyed considerable popularity up to the end of a long life; Charles Dance (1794–1863) was a prolific writer for the theatres; Oliver eludes identification.

“6, *Seymour Terrace, Little Chelsea,*
“*Aug. 1833.*”

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I waited for you yesterday (with Serle, etc.) at Miller’s¹ till half-past three. We meet there on Saturday next at two. Will you come? It is about this *3d.* theatre. I did not see your luminary² of Wednesday week, not being able to get to town. But have no doubt you then added to the debt which it gives me great pleasure to owe *you.*”

“Yours ever, very truly,
“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

“Miss Tidswell—my near and dear neighbour—has requested me to ask you about the safety (I presume tender associations make her anxious) of a portrait of Kean. Will you appease ‘this tumult in a vestal’s veins?’ I find I must put by *Beau Nash* till next year, as it must be three acts. My little affair of *Swamp Hall* comes out next week.”

The “little affair of *Swamp Hall*” was a farcical comedy produced at the Haymarket Theatre in September 1833, which for some reason failed to tickle the popular fancy, despite the praise accorded to it by the critics. One writer said: “*Swamp Hall*, an admirable piece by Jerrold, has been most brainlessly condemned by a Haymarket audience. It was a trifle of extreme merit, but the public sometimes applauds trash to the echo and condemns really admirable

¹ John Miller of Henrietta Street, who published some of Jerrold’s plays.

² The *True Sun*,

productions. If such conduct suits them, it is not for us to interfere, since their bad taste brings with it its own penalty!" It also brings a pretty severe penalty upon the author, whose work of some weeks or months is thus "brainlessly condemned" in a single evening. "The public sometimes applauds trash to the echo," suggests a mot of Jerrold's on the subject. A friend who was with him at one of the patent houses when a dull and stupid play had met with a favourable reception, said it was astonishing that any people could be found foolish enough to applaud such stuff. "Why," said Jerrold at once, "all those who clap their hands probably had *orders* to do so." That *Swamp Hall* had been offered to Drury Lane before going to the Haymarket, we learn from a number of reports on plays read by Thomas Morton given in Alfred Bunn's *The Stage, Both Before and Behind the Curtain*; for though Bunn waxed wroth over Kemble's appointment as official Examiner of Plays in succession to Colman, he submitted the pieces sent in to Drury Lane to the judgment of a playwright! Of *Swamp Hall* Morton said: "This piece I have either read or seen, as all the circumstances are familiar to me. Won't do at all." He had presumably read Jerrold's magazine story of the same name.¹ From that story we may gather that the play was an amusing exposé of the weakness of people

¹ Reprinted in *Tales of Douglas Jerrold Now First Collected*, 1891.

who put up with the tyranny of a person from whom they have "expectations."

On the second day of the new year, 1834, another play of Jerrold's, *The Wedding Gown*, was produced at Drury Lane. It was very well received, the author being hailed as "in his way the Lillo of his day"—though it was, perhaps, no very high compliment to be bracketed with the author of *George Barnwell*—and during February the piece was represented before King William IV, "by special desire." A scrap of contemporary criticism called forth by this play runs :

"While such pieces as this are written, produced and fill the theatre, surely there can be no just foundation for the remark that has been made that the drama has declined. If the stage has not been prosperous this little comedy alone suffices to prove that the dramatic author is not the party chargeable with the faults that must have been committed or the injuries that have been sustained. On the contrary, we apprehend the dramatic author is the individual who has suffered the greatest wrong under the state of things to which we have adverted. But Mr. Jerrold and *The Wedding Gown* inspires us with hopes of a better condition for the Muse whom Shakespeare wedded to immortality. The comedy reads as well as it acts—perhaps better, for we have marked several passages of great natural truth and animated feeling, to which full justice has not yet been done at Drury Lane. That felicitous tact and neat development of his subject, that pleasant ingenuity and sparkling polish of dialogue by which the author has so remarkably distinguished himself,

are calculated to tell as effectively in the closet as on the stage. We sympathize with Lubeski and his interesting daughter; smile at Beeswing; tease, trifle, yet may mean well with Margaret; and rejoice with all parties when at last by that skilful *dénouement* their happiness is assured."

Another critic said—

"At Drury Lane the principal feature has been Jerrold's interesting drama of the *Wedding Gown*.¹ On reviewing the merits of this gentleman we scarcely know which to admire most—his terse and polished writing, his fine, manly sentiments, or that consummate skill which, without violating probability, excites and keeps alive the interest of his audience."

It was presumably during the spring of 1834 that Jerrold removed from Seymour Terrace to 11, Thistle Grove, still in Little Chelsea. Since his time that narrow way has been renumbered, so that it cannot be said whether his house was at the old end that remains or in the rebuilt portion.

Jerrold had another comedy in hand, *Beau Nash*, as we saw in his letter to Forster of a few months earlier. It was to be finished by the summer, and on June 25 the dramatist wrote again to his friend from his new address:

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—Will you come and eat something with me on Sunday? Sam² is really

¹ It enjoyed a run of twenty-nine nights during its first season.

² Laman Blanchard.

coming!!!! (so you can't refuse). Dine at 4, military time.

“Yours ever truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“Drop me a line—or if passing leave [it] at Miller's or Divan. I am very ill, being *just delivered*.”

The postscript evidently refers to the new three-act comedy of manners, *Beau Nash, the King of Bath*, which was produced about three weeks later (July 16) at the Haymarket Theatre, and on which the author declared he had spent far more than twice as much labour of thought and research as on any other of his dramatic pieces. The thought and research were well spent, and the piece was received with considerable applause, yet for some reason the author did not include it in his collected writings. In the preface to the printed edition of this comedy—dated from Little Chelsea three days after the production of the piece—he wrote :

“In a *Life of Richard Nash, Esq.*, attributed to the pen of Goldsmith, may be found full authority for the eccentricities of the stage hero. In the same biography the writer incidentally dwells upon the knavish subtleties and compunctious visitings of a Jack Baxter; who, though never honoured with the personal intimacy of the beau monarch, yet desired to acknowledge in fine bold type his wayward and royal benevolence. The only ‘historical’ persons in the present drama are the lauded potentate and the laudatory pickpocket.

“The author pleads guilty to one charge made against his drama—that it possesses ‘no startling situations’; and confesses that, doubtless, a comedy of *manners* would be a much better comedy were it a melodrama.

“‘Startling situations’ have been so frequent that the public are now taught—by some, too, whose ostensible duty it is to teach the public better—to consider mere men and women mere commonplaces; and mere pictures of life mere everyday dulness. According to such instructors, audiences are to be treated not as a body of persons in sound moral health but as a convocation of opium-eaters. A dramatist is now to be ‘a dreamer of dreams,’ and not an illustrator of truths.”

There are several hits in the opening scenes of the comedy at the neglect of the legitimate drama for the performance of puppets, and though the scene is set in the Bath of the eighteenth century, it is probable that the author was glancing at something of the taste of his period in stage matters :

“*Derby*. Who and what are you ?

Claptrap. By name, Thespis Claptrap, formerly actor at the playhouse here in Bath; but now, chief assistant to the illustrious Mr. Powell.

Derby. Not the Powell who has set Bath mad after his puppets ?

Claptrap. Sir, the professor of motions; and with myself, as Mr. Bickerstaff’s Tatler will certify, worker of Punch.

Wilton. Well, though I have heard much of the puppets, I never heard of you.

Claptrap. To be sure not, sir; the wood and paint

carry it; who thinks of the poor devils who find the words and pull the wires?

Wilton. Yet why leave the wisdom of the theatre for the jargon of the puppet show?

Claptrap. Sir, I did but follow the example of my betters. They vowed the playhouse was the vulgar produce of barbarous times; and so patronized Punch to display their refinement."

Later on, too, Claptrap, when he hears a lady say that she dearly loves all plays, urges, "Never confess it: 'tis enough to ruin you with people of wit"; adding: "if you'd pass for somebody, you must sneer at a play, but idolize Punch. I know the most refined folks, who'd not budge a foot to hear Garrick, would give a guinea each, nay, mob for a whole morning, to see a Greenlander eat seal's flesh and swallow whale oil."

The time of the play is that when the Beau's portrait was about to be hung in the Pump Room between the busts of Pope and Newton—that conjunction which inspired Lord Chesterfield's famous quatrain:

"This Picture placed the busts between
Gives satire all its strength—
Wisdom and Wit are little seen
And Folly at full length!"

The dramatist also has his hit at the completion of the trio:

"*Wilton.* A statue of Nash!

Derby. Aye, erected in the Pump Room by the mayor and aldermen; who, with corporation taste,

place the figure between the busts of Newton and Pope.

Wilton. Impossible! The corporation cannot so offend philosophy and wit.

Derby. Why, in this case, the corporation reverse the common rule, and use no ceremony with strangers."

The comedy of manners has many satiric touches, but also much of a tenderer humour, and to it as a whole may be applied the words used by Nash of his piece for the puppets, "The play is like the leaf that Dr. Cheney talks of—one side a blister, the other a salve."

The critics waxed eloquent in praise of *Beau Nash*. Forster wrote a lengthy and appreciative notice in the *New Monthly Magazine*, in the course of which he said :

"For this we are obliged to Mr. Jerrold. . . . He strives to fix, in permanent colours, some of the fleeting bygone follies of mankind. Long ago, from the groves and glories of Bath, its assembly, its pump-room, and its wells, a 'parting genius was with sighing sent,' which now the dramatist restores to us in his habit as he lived, with his tawdry dress and his white hat, putting him on the real scene, with the real associates of his life around him, fearing not to make them occupy what is now rare and dangerous ground (for the stage, nowadays, must reduce everything either to strict morality or to 'open manslaughter and bold bawdry')—that neutral ground of character which stands between vice and virtue, which is in fact indifferent to neither. 'A happy breathing place from the burden of a perpetual moral questioning'



DOUGLAS JERROLD IN CARICATURE

Copied by Miss Daphne Jerrold after the following—

- (1, standing) John Leech, *Punch*; (2 and 3, wasp and snake) *A Word with Punch*; (4, pen) Kenny Meadows, *Heads of the People*; (5) John Tenniel, *Punch*; (6) Richard Doyle, *Punch*; (7) W. M. Thackeray, *Punch*; (8, "the printer's devil") Kenny Meadows, *Heads of the People*; (9, with drum) John Leech, *Punch*.

and scorning to mar the truth of his picture by any merely trading convulsions or startling situations. . . . We must make a charge here, too, against our accomplished author, which we have elsewhere made more than once. He is too fond of repartee. He can bear to be told this, for he shares the fault in very illustrious company. Congreve always made wit too much the business, instead of the ornament of his comedies. In Mr. Jerrold's dialogue passages are every now and then peeping out which seem to have been prepared, 'cut and dry,' for the scene. The speaker has evidently brought them with him; he has not caught them on the scene by the help of some light of dialogue or suggestion of present circumstances. We beg of Mr. Jerrold to consider this more curiously in his next production, and we beg of him to lose no time in favouring us again."

The author was evidently not disposed to lose much time, for the following note was probably written before Forster's criticism made its appearance in the August number of the magazine.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—I enclose the order. It is the only one I have had since the first night; determining—sink or swim—that the manager should not have to accuse me of paper support. I leave the *Beau* to the charity of the gentle public; and that the Lord may touch their hearts and awaken their understandings, is the disinterested prayer of,

"Yours ever truly,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD.

"I commenced yesterday a new comedy of pure fiction. 'At 'em again!'"

This note was probably followed closely by the next (they are both undated). The proof referred to may have been one of Forster's article on the *Beau* for the *New Monthly*.

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I leave town to-morrow for Doncaster. I have troubled you with this to prevent the misinterpretation of my silence touching the proof you thought to send me; which kindness will now be unnecessary; at least, useless. I shall be absent at most about 3 weeks. I hope to bring back with me *such a comedy!* Yours, my dear Forster, ever,
“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

Of the visit to Doncaster—where his brother-in-law Hammond had the theatre—no record remains; if it took place it was evidently but a short one, for on August 8 Jerrold wrote once more from his home in Chelsea :

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I am deeply indebted to you for the long, elaborate and analytical essay in the *N.M.M.*¹ At this time it may be of peculiar service to me : for I have every reason to believe that it is the intention of Mr. Morris to play me false. Last night (August 7) the comedy was acted for the tenth time; and placed between two such cold slices of bread and butter as *The Padlock* and *The Green-Eyed Monster* : nevertheless, the house was full—(the boxes crowded)—and, if there be truth in actors, the piece went off better than ever. Yet, in despite of its increasing effect, I find by the bills of to-day that it is not to be repeated until Wednesday. Unfortunately, I have no *written* agreement with Morris, who was to pay me on the success of the piece : which

¹ The *New Monthly Magazine*.

success he now broadly insinuates is not evident; and, at the same time, does all that in him lies to prevent. These are your Christian managers! However, I wrote to thank you, and not to inflict upon you a volume of grief of,

“Yours most truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“I have so frequently written to you, appointing a day for you to come and see me, that I now leave the day to your *own choice*. Name a day next week; give me 48 hours' notice; and bring with you any such five feet two of natural dissipation and acquired infamy as Sam,¹ the Joshua of the *True Sun*.”

Douglas Jerrold often had occasion to complain of “your Christian managers,” and one of his retorts to Morris may well find a place here, more especially as it was probably made during the preparations for *Beau Nash*. The dramatist was finding fault with the strength, or lack of strength, of the Haymarket company, when the manager expostulated, saying, “Why, there's Vining, he was bred on these boards!”

“He looks as though he'd been *cut out of them*,” retaliated Jerrold.

It is, of course, impossible now to decide upon the relative merits of the combatants in the dispute between Jerrold and Morris, but when the matter had to be taken to the courts of justice the jury was with the dramatist. The manager certainly appears to have justified Jerrold's indignation by his treatment of

¹ Laman Blanchard, then editing the *True Sun*.

the brilliant and should-have-been-successful comedy. On August 12 the author again mentioned the subject in a note to Forster :

“ I have, in vain, tried the actors for orders—(I am, at this moment, 2 p.m., reeking in a wet shirt); orders they have not, *i. e.*—they say so. Morris I cannot encounter until the *Beau* has run his course. You may take this consolation in your disappointment; you are not alone: for Mrs. Shelley, who wrote to me on Saturday, for the same favour, is also on your side. Now, I don't care much about you, but I am very much annoyed that I cannot oblige a lady on her first request. So it is, but let us hope there is another and a better theatre ‘ where the Forsters cease from troubling and the Jerrolds are at rest.’ I hope you got home safe; and, believe me, I am very well; and, moreover, believe that I am,

“ Yours ever truly,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“ I leave town (I hope) on Saturday, for ‘ the open sea,’ for (I hope) a month.”

The hope that he would be leaving town at the end of the same week for “ the open sea ” which he loved so much proved illusory, and the close of the same month found him still at home in Little Chelsea. On the 28th he wrote again to Forster :

“ MY DEAR FORSTER,—I enclose you a notice of the lecture—which I earnestly wish you could have heard. I have, perhaps, been partial in the length of my remarks, but not, I assure you, in their spirit. The discourse was excellent; no less so for not

mincing the matter. I am now at law with Morris [having] proceeded as far as possible until November. He refuses to pay me another shilling in addition to the £50. We must fight for it, and so 'God defend the right.' If you see Procter¹ will you tell him that 'a most eligible opportunity now presents itself' in the way of a house; my next-door neighbour is compelled to move; the house is the same extent, same rent, with better garden than mine. So you can, with your glowing powers of description, give him a notion of the bargain. I answered his note, but have not heard from him. It will much oblige me, and serve a true fellow (one of the right kind²) if the enclosed be inserted. I have written it in a feigned hand, as I contemplate sending some articles to the *N.M.M.* from myself. Morris coldly informed me that he should never play the *Beau* again. I was wrong not to give the play a spice of the bawdy; I understand that it is just now very successful at the Haymarket,

"Yours ever truly,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD."

It was during the stay in Thistle Grove that one of those "home incidents" occurred which Jerrold readily turned to literary purposes. A pair of pea-fowls had been presented to him and proved anything but agreeable pets. Their story was tragic. The screaming of the peacock and his wandering ways caused complaints from the neighbours, and each time

¹ B. W. Procter, still perhaps better known by his pen-name as "Barry Cornwall."

² Probably accompanying a manuscript signed with the writer's *nom de plume* of Henry Brownrigg.

he was brought back his captor expected to be rewarded. The experience was no doubt heightened by fancy in *The Peacock ; a Household Incident*,¹ which Jerrold wrote two or three years later. When it was decided that the troublesome birds should be got rid of a friend who had greatly admired them begged that he might have them as ornaments to his grounds, and they were duly transferred to him. A few weeks later a member of Douglas Jerrold's household was calling at a poulterer's shop near the friend's home, and mention was made of the birds, when it was learned that peacock and peahen had had but short shrift in their new place, being handed over to the poulterer in exchange for table poultry !

"Give a friend your hand as often as you like," says Jerrold in one of his plays, "but never, never let there be a pen in it." It would have been well if he had acted up to his own counsel, but possibly that counsel had been born of experience, for towards the close of 1834 he had to pay the penalty for "backing a bill" for a friend. However, he had done the friendly act, the friend failed to meet his engagement, and Jerrold was looked to for a sum of money which it was quite out of his power to pay. A retreat across the Channel was made necessary, and to Paris the dramatist, his wife and younger three-year-old daughter and presumably the baby Thomas departed,

¹ Reprinted in *Tales by Douglas Jerrold now first collected*, 1891.

and there they spent the terribly severe winter of 1834-5. If he had made himself responsible for liabilities more than he could meet, the brave man was by no means downcast, and the months passed in the French capital were fruitful of work of the most varied character.

It is not possible to say when Jerrold's connection with the *Examiner* ceased, but the following letters, addressed by him to John Forster, appear to refer to work on that journal—the only paper with which they were both connected, so far as is known, before the *Daily News* of a dozen years later. This seems to have been the first occasion on which Douglas Jerrold suffered from that rheumatism of the eyes, by which he was more than once severely tortured. As the letters are not dated, it can only be assumed that they were written about this time, for they are addressed to Forster in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and he did not go to reside there until 1834.

“*Friday noon.*

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—If, without *great risk*, I can get to the office to-morrow, I will; if not I have desired [] to send you the papers for the post-script, and must trouble you for the same; for I cannot at all confront the light, and pen this with difficulty. If I am not at the office by 10—which if possible I will be—you will have the papers from the office,

“Yours truly,

“D. JERROLD.

“I write this in a room all but entirely darkened. I open letter to say that the doctor has just been with

me and pronounced another sentence of leeches with supplementary blister and poultice. Order not to quit room. Hence, *I must trouble you to-morrow.*”

“*Monday.*

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—It was only last night that I was assured of the safety of my eye; I trust I shall now escape partial blindness, though at present I am now in that condition. In every other respect I am mending; and having now been twelve days on tea and calomel, with incidental bleedings and blisterings, am promoted to mutton broth. Before I sent you the papers on Tuesday last, I literally fainted away in my attempt to mark them for cutting out. I was forbidden to make the slightest effort with my eyesight, and—as I did not hear from you last week—thought there would not have been much difficulty in getting them done for the present. However, I have hit upon a way to meet the dilemma, and if you will let me have to-day’s papers by the boy (they were served upon you this morning) I will get somebody to read them to me and to make a selection. The papers of to-morrow shall (I will take care) be delivered upon me.

“Yours ever truly,

“D. JERROLD.

“I believe my dear and early friend Blanchard is not employed after 3 o’clock every afternoon—but ‘*that’s not much.*’”

The third letter deals with Jerrold’s final break with the *Examiner*, apparently in consequence of his position on the journal not being properly defined.

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I prepared copy this week, not having heard from Mr. Fonblanque, to whom I had promised a continuance until he should have made another election; I, however, avail myself of your offer, and on the close of the present week, lay down my office.

“In Mr. Fonblanque’s last letter to me he expresses a hope of being able to make some arrangement with me for contributions. Whether, however, this hope still exists, I know not. At all events, I quit the *Ex.*; but my present office is susceptible of a misrepresentation in no way conducive to my interests or agreeable to my feelings. This misrepresentation—I hope not *consciously*—has been made, and by Blanchard. It is, however, scarcely worth a thought.

“Ever yours,

“D. JERROLD.

“At the Club, in full conclave, on Saturday week, my position on the *Ex.* was, I understand, *defined*, that is misrepresented in no very flattering way to me; and that on the authority of a new contributor. I have written to Mr. F.”

It is possible that the misrepresentations, whatever they may have been, were responsible for the temporary coolness between Jerrold and Laman Blanchard referred to in the letter from the latter given in an earlier chapter. Dateless correspondence is one of the greatest difficulties, and one of the commonest, in the path of the biographer.

CHAPTER VIII

SOJOURN IN PARIS : FREEMASONRY

1835—1836

TOWARDS the close of 1834, as we have seen, the delinquency of a friend in not meeting a bill—which we may be sure he was quite certain of meeting when he persuaded Jerrold to back it—had made it advisable for the dramatist to cross the Channel, and the early part of 1835 found him, a young man of thirty-two of acknowledged reputation as a dramatist, working hard in Paris, that city whence so many of his fellow playwrights sought all the necessary “inspiration” for their pieces. The few months’ stay in the gay city must have been spent in hard work, for the author soon had several plays ready for the stage, and that he had been writing short essays in fiction the magazines of the period show.

In Paris in this early part of the year 1835 several young Englishmen were living who were destined to play an important part in the public eye. John Barnett, the popular composer of *The Mountain Sylph*,¹ was in the Rue d’Amboise, and in the same house with

¹ Which had been successfully produced at the Lyceum during the preceding autumn.

him dwelt young Henry Mayhew, to be honourably known in later years as the pioneer into a new world of investigation in his splendid work on *London Labour and the London Poor*, and in connection with the early history of *Punch*. Another and yet more notable English resident in Paris was William Makepeace Thackeray, then a young man of three-and-twenty, more or less busy over his art studies.

Visiting Barnett's rooms after dinner one evening Jerrold first met Mayhew, his name suggesting the firm of solicitors whose pressing claims had something to do with the retirement on Paris. Together the two left Barnett's place, the younger man having volunteered to accompany Jerrold back to his quarters in the old Place Carrousel.

"Immediately we set foot in the street" (to repeat Henry Mayhew's version of the incident) "Jerrold said eagerly, 'You are connected with Mayhew, the solicitor of Carey Street, are you not?'"

"'I am,' I replied, more mystified than ever, 'his son.'"

"'I thought so!' exclaimed the author of *Black-Eyed Susan*, with a heavy sigh, 'and you are come over about those bills,' he quickly added.

"'Those bills! What bills? I know nothing about any bills,' was my rejoinder. 'You needn't fancy that I have anything to do with the law.'"

"'Haven't you, by Jove!' cried the little man, and he stopped suddenly, as if to shake a heavy load of care from his back. 'Then give me your hand, sir. I am glad to meet a *gentleman*,' said he, with a significant emphasis on the word, 'who

doesn't require an Act of Parliament to make him one,' for Jerrold could never resist the chance of having a fling at the legal profession."¹

Night after night, said Henry Mayhew, in an article in a forgotten magazine, did discussions go on in the composer's rooms in Paris with Jerrold, Mayhew and Barnett as chief spokesmen, and Thackeray more as an amused listener than as an active disputant. To cite Henry Mayhew's recollections as further given by his son :

“The evenings passed in John Barnett's rooms at Paris among such splendid company as the future authors of *Vanity Fair* and *Mrs. Caudle's Lectures*, as well as the composer of the *Mountain Sylph*, were things to be perpetually treasured in the brain—to be treasured as tenaciously as the sea-shell stores up the whisperings of the mighty ocean, and keeps on for ever recalling the syren voices long after they have ceased to murmur their music in the ear. . . . Night after night did this celebrated *triumviri* assemble in the Rue d'Amboise to talk, over their coffee and 'caporal,' the wildest nonsense and the finest sense it was ever my happy lot to listen to. And night after night, let the discourse take at first whatever turn it might, it was sure at last to get into the same old metaphysical tangle—'Which was the greatest art : music, painting or the drama ?' being the nice little knot which the three young pundits would invariably endeavour to unpick.

“Barnett, of course, was *music's* champion.

¹ *A Jorum of "Punch" with Those Who Helped to Brew it, Being the Early History of "The London Charivari,"* by Athol Mayhew, 1895.

Thackeray, on the other hand (for he was then studying figure-drawing at Passy, in the vain belief, strange to say, that he was more of an artist than author), entered the lists in favour of *painting*; while Jerrold took up the cudgels for the *drama*, and belaboured away at the others in right good earnest—his final knockdown blow generally being a reference to Hamlet's celebrated soliloquy, 'To be or not to be.'

" 'There, Master Thackeray!' the little man would cry triumphantly, 'could *you* or your Michael Angelo, or your Rubens, or Rembrandt, ever put *that* upon canvas? And you, Master Barnett! could you, or any Beethoven or Mozart that ever lived, set *that* to music?'

"And with this slight poser the conversation would lapse once more into that agreeable kind of 'chaff' with which, the proverb tells us, young birds rather than old ones are apt to be most taken."

These Paris gatherings were to be the precursors of many similar London ones—three of the quartet were to be associated at the *Punch* table a few years later—but though they formed a pleasant opportunity for recreation in his holiday exile, Jerrold was busy preparing new plays, for 1835 was to prove one of his busiest years in connection with the theatre, and he was also engaged in writing the first of a series of pregnant, suggestive stories which were to appear in *Blackwood's Magazine*,¹ and later in volume form with

¹ In her biographical work on *William Blackwood and His Sons* Mrs. Oliphant, referring to Douglas Jerrold's contributions to *Maga*, says that he can scarcely have

illustrations by Thackeray. The great novelist was still looking to his pencil rather than to his pen to bring him fame, and it may well be that it was when they met in Paris that his illustrating Jerrold's stories was first suggested. *Silas Fleshpots, a Respectable Man*, which was written in Paris and despatched thence to *Blackwood's*, was subsequently to be portrayed by Thackeray, and it is not fanciful to believe that the proposal that he should do so started in the Rue d'Amboise.

The little matter of the bill was duly settled, and the stay in the French capital was evidently but a short one, for Jerrold was doubtless back in London early in February, in the middle of which month no fewer than four of his pieces were produced, two at the Olympic, and one each at Drury Lane and the Queen's Theatre. The two former were unsuccessful, but the others were both "hits," more especially the

felt himself at home in its pages, adding: "He contributed a few of his farcical stories and was vigorously denounced by [Samuel] Warren, who took the trouble to write to the Blackwoods, solemnly asserting that his sole motive was of the highest kind, to implore them to put an end to contributions which were impairing the tone of the magazine and disgusting its readers. I do not suppose that this adjuration had any effect, but Jerrold's contributions did not continue very long." Possibly this was Warren's retort-underhand to Jerrold's witticism at his expense; for it is said to have been Warren who, enlarging upon the fact that he had dined at a nobleman's house, said that he could not understand why there had been no fish on the table—"Perhaps they ate it all *upstairs*," suggested Jerrold.

one which, played at the little Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, had been rejected by the "reader" for Covent Garden and Drury Lane, as we see in the author's dedicatory epistle.

The first piece, *Hearts and Diamonds*, was placed before the public at the Olympic on February 13, and of it nothing now remains but the briefest newspaper notices. Three days later *The Hazard of the Die*, a tragic drama in two acts, was brought out at Drury Lane, and achieved a distinct success; on the same evening *The Schoolfellows*, a two-act comedy, made a brilliant debut at the "minor" Queen's Theatre, and on the following night *The Man's an Ass* was produced and instantly condemned on account, it is reported, of some "ticklish turn." The manuscript of this play is in the Forster Collection at South Kensington Museum, briefly and pointedly endorsed, "Played once and d—d."

The Hazard of the Die, presented by a strong cast including Messrs. Wallack and Benjamin Webster and Mrs. Faucit, achieved a distinct triumph, while the comedy at the Queen's Theatre was by far the most notable of these fruits of the winter's stay in Paris. It was, indeed, probably only finished there, for, as we saw, the author was at work on a new comedy—"At 'em again"—the previous summer shortly after the production of *Beau Nash*. That new comedy was *The Schoolfellows*, one of the most charming of all his dramatic

works, and the only one of these four plays produced during February 1835 to find a place in his collected writings.

It is a tender two-act comedy, telling the story of a group of one-time schoolfellows, who meet at Hampstead at the house of their whilom master, Cedar, the kindly pedagogue whose prejudice it had ever been "to prefer one slip of olive to a whole grove of birch." The schoolfellows comprise Horace, the son of Sir Luke Meredith, who has made a runaway match and brings his ten-day's bride to Cedar; Jasper, the nameless boy who had been left at the school by one Rushworth who had carried off the schoolmaster's daughter; Nicholas Shilling, a purse-proud "man of property"; Jack Marigold, an apothecary in love with Shilling's sister, and Tom Drops, whose weakness for liquor has reduced him to the position of factotum at the local inn. With Cedar is his granddaughter Esther. Jasper, who had run away from the school as a child, returns as a man having made his fortune, and when he insists on learning the secret of his parentage from the old schoolmaster he is told that he is Esther's half-brother, for it is only later when Rushworth returns to make his peace that Cedar finds his belief in the boy's origin wrong—that he is in truth another son of Sir Luke Meredith.

Here is a pretty bit of talk in which the runaway bridegroom tells of the elopement :

"*Cedar.* Silly boy and girl ! how *could* you marry ?

Horace. Why, sir, the match was made by the old

confederates—love and opportunity. Our hearts fell victims to the cherry season.

Cedar. The cherry season?

Horace. Sir, the proof. Many an evening had we mingled oaths and sighs—Marion from her chamber window—I from the garden. And thus, sir, guileless and loving, we should have gone on, ay, until the day of wrinkles. 'Twas enough for us to see—to hear each other.

Marion. Indeed, I had no other thought.

Horace. But, sir, in a disastrous hour, the gardener left his ladder at a certain cherry tree. Well, sir, to tell you how it happened passes my wit. Suffice it—I found the ladder at Marion's window, and Marion's hand, like a ripe peach, fast in mine. She never looked so destroyingly lovely—her eyes were never so bright——

Marion. Horace!

Horace. Her lips never so red——

Cedar. But then, 'twas the cherry season.

Horace. Still, to run away was not to be thought of. I vow, sir, as I ascended the ladder, Plato went with me every round.

Cedar. And having taken you to the top, it seems he wouldn't spoil company, so left you there. Plato was ever a good master of the ceremonies; just introducing people, and then politely making his bow. Well, the lady came down.

Horace. My heart beating count—and each thump louder than the last—at every step. Talk of Venus rising from the sea! Were I to paint a Venus she should be escaping from a cottage window, with a face now white, now red, as the roses nodding about it; an eye, like her own star; lips, sweetening the jasmine, as it clings to hold them; a face and form in which harmonious thoughts seem as vital breath!

Nothing but should speak : her little hand should tell a love-tale ; nay, her very foot, planted on the ladder, should utter eloquence, enough to stop a hermit at his beads, and make him watchman whilst the lady fled.

Cedar. Horace Meredith, if you propose to publish a new mythology, I must say—schoolmaster as I am—your Venus is a pretty sample of the work.”

There is much neat wit in the play of dialogue. When the man of property says, “ Haven’t I studied mankind ? ” “ Aye,” agrees the schoolmaster, “ but I fear only as thieves study a house—to take advantage of the weakest parts of it.” When Shilling says to Marigold, “ Do you question the effect of my courage ? ” he gets the reply, “ On the contrary—I think no man makes so little go so far.” Shilling is like Falstaff, in that he is often the cause that wit is in other men ; when he snubs his old schoolmate Drops with, “ You have forgotten yourself in your drink,” he is countered with, “ If the drink will do as much for you, take to the bottle to-morrow.”

In the end the tangle is cleared up, the irate Sir Luke is placated, and a pleasant comedy reaches its fitting close in the forgiveness of the runaways, in the man of property bowing to the inevitable in the love of his sister (though he prudently declares that she shall not touch her inheritance until twenty-one), and in the promised union of Jasper and Esther.

In March the *Schoolfellows* was published with the following interesting dedicatory epistle

to Thomas James Serle, which is worth quoting here, as it only occurs in the early edition of the play, and as it expresses pointedly some of the author's views on the difficulties encountered by the conscientious playwrights at a time when the drama was supposed to be in a low state :

“MY DEAR SERLE,—Would the accompanying little comedy were more worthy of your acceptance ! It was my wish to make it so ; but the evil crisis upon which we have fallen, rendering the exercise of our art, as an art, almost hopeless—the *system* which has flung the Dramatic Muse under horse's hoofs, turning every well-considered and elaborate attempt at stage literature, to the confusion of its projector, compelled me in the present instance to forgo my first plan of five acts, and to adopt that of two. In shortening my labour I, no doubt, lessened my disappointment. This may, in some measure, account for, if it do not wholly excuse, a want of minute development of character, a hurry of incidents, and a suddenness of catastrophe. The subject to be duly illustrated required no less than five acts ; but five acts in these days !

“ In inscribing to you *The Schoolfellows*, you will not, I am convinced, give the drama a less cordial welcome because refused by the professionally retained reader¹—the *one* reader—appointed to the *two* theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden.² That

¹ Frederick Reynolds, 1764–1841.

² The following from a contemporary magazine is interesting in this connection : “ We would conclude our theatrical remarks by offering a tribute of gratitude to Mr. Jerrold, for endeavouring to arrest the decadence of the drama, but find that, to act fairly by him, would be

gentleman was, doubtless, correct in his opinions, that for the two patent stages the piece was altogether ineffective. But tell me, in passing such sentence, did not the one janitor to the twin temples of fame somehow question their right to a privilege, which the legislature makes almost wholly their own? However, such was the answer; and though, in our boyhood, we may have enjoyed a scene in which Grimaldi fulfilled at the same moment the office of porter to two mansions, yet, with the present exclusive market, a negative from the one porter of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, though the said porter has himself been half-a-century a comic writer, is, certainly, not one of his best jokes. Nay, there are better, even in *Laugh When You Can*.¹

“*The Schoolfellows* was not, we have it on authority, calculated to attract sufficient money to either of the two larger houses. I now conscientiously believe it. Subsequent events have confirmed me in the melancholy conviction that a writer who—unassisted by a troop of horse, an earthquake, a conflagration, or a

to devote an article exclusively to the subject, which just now is impossible. Mr. Jerrold will believe us when we state that *The Hazard of the Die*, if it has not proved a lucky throw for Drury Lane, is owing to the caprice of the manager who interrupted its success for reasons best known to himself.

“It was given for eleven nights.

“The plot was excellent—the soul-stirring interest was most intense—and the performers generally, but Mr. Wallack in particular, did the author that justice which marked their full conception of his spirit. *The Schoolfellows* at the Queen’s and *Hearts and Diamonds* at the Olympic (both by Mr. Jerrold) are mentioned, not merely as being successfully performed, but because each in its way deserves unmixed commendation. We do not hesitate to affirm that *The Schoolfellows* at either of the larger houses would have assisted the treasury.”

¹ One of Frederick Reynolds’s own plays.

cataract—trusts merely to the conduct of his fable, his words and his characters, must fail, at least in the treasury sense, at either Drury Lane or Covent Garden; this is one of the sternest truths that men admit; for it is a truth of the pocket. When the prices at the patent houses are nearly double those of what are called the minor theatres, who—unless it be to see some extraordinary raree-show wide away from the real purpose of the drama—will pay the heavier charge?

“At the time I write, *The Schoolfellows* has been acted twenty-seven times, and is still announced for further repetition. ‘Yes,’ it may be answered, ‘but acted at a minor theatre, where the audience is less cultivated, and consequently less critical; where, with an undistinguishing appetite, they may thankfully devour the refuse of Covent Garden.’ Though little disposed to make the Court Guide the only test of judgment, I might have crowded into the page a long list of lords and ladies of every degree of nobility, who—for their names have gemmed the paragraphs of newspapers—have assisted, to use a French phrase, at the unlawful representation of *The Schoolfellows* at an unlicensed theatre. This is no extravagance; the tyro in heraldry might gain most discursive knowledge from the coach panels that are nightly wedged in Tottenham Street.

“This point brings me to the question on which you, my dear Serle, have long laboured; distinguishing yourself, no less by a singleness of purpose in the advocacy of commonsense, and of the rights of every man whose hard destiny it is to live by the sweat of his *pen*, than by fervid eloquence and the soundest judgment. Surely, excluded by a system (for I make no charge against individuals; I believe they are fully aware of the hopelessness of the present

state of things) from what the legislature, in its former wisdom, intended to be the highest reward of the dramatist—when told that the only prizes to be won at the two theatres are, as in some of the olden games, to be carried away upon horseback—when the only Pegasus of the patent theatres is to be found in the mews of Mr. Ducrow—it is not too much to ask from the Government an assured retreat, where the writer and the actor may pursue their calling, safe from ‘the armed heels’ of bays and piebalds. It is no answer for our opponents to tell us there are, for the exercise of the art of the dramatist and the player, the minor theatres. Those establishments, with only two exceptions, are at the mercy of the common informer every night; though the patricians of the land, by their patronage, countenance the illegality, their licences are forfeited. Thus they are insecure in their tenure; and, even when licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, are trammelled by absurd fallacies; though, in sorrow I say it, there is no public functionary whose orders are so constantly evaded as are the mandates of the royal key-bearer. His Lordship says there shall be six songs in each act of every burletta: and the due number are constantly sent to the Deputy Licenser—(nay, I know a recent instance in which the verses were selected from the works of the Deputy himself)—who pockets the fee, with a full conviction that in five out of six instances not one of the songs will be retained, but were merely sent to cheat the unsuspecting Chamberlain!

“In the appeal which must again be made to the legislature, we have surely a claim to the advocacy of those noblemen who visit minor theatres. Surely they will not refuse their voices when they have before given their names; they can hardly take boxes

at a playhouse, and then, by their vote, declare it, if not mischievous, unnecessary.

“ In the hope that the question of the existence of a national drama will meet with that speedy consideration which it now so strongly demands, and in the conviction that with its purity and elevation your efforts must meet with a proportionate reward, believe me, dear Serle,

“ Your sincere friend,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“ *Little Chelsea,*

“ *March 20, 1835.*”

It was an old cry, that against the animal shows at the theatres, for the Brothers Smith had given forceful utterance to it more than twenty years earlier in the *Rejected Addresses*. It was indeed an old cry and is a new one, for *Punch* has but recently had his gibe at the real sheep and camel introduced in *Joseph and His Brethren* at His Majesty's Theatre. Alfred Bunn, who for a time controlled the destinies of both the patent houses at this period, lamented the taste of the public, but declared that it was necessary to give that public what it wanted or to shut up the theatres. The reference to the extent to which the “ minor ” theatres were at the mercy of the common informer is interesting in that in the very month in which the letter was written, the company performing at the Strand Theatre were summoned at the instigation of such a common informer, the principals were fined, and the house closed !

The third of the four new pieces of Jerrold's

produced within a single week, *The Hazard of the Die* at Drury Lane, enjoyed a goodly measure of success, thanks largely to the acting of Wallack, which in a note to the printed play the author briefly avowed "in the hope that in dramatic as in commercial matters, a few words may be understood to convey a due acknowledgment of the heaviest debt." Why the run of the play was stopped by the "caprice of the manager" cannot be said. The author's words in the preface to *The Schoolfellows* indicate that when the dramatist did get beyond the "patent" portals he was still in uneasy case.

The story is one of the French Revolution on the eve of Robespierre's downfall. David Duvigne has gambled to raise money that by means of bribery he may get his mother, his brother Charles, Violette and her father St. Ange safely away from Paris. His plans are overheard by Citizen President Kalmer, and the threatened crisis is hastened—Charles Duvigne and St. Ange being arrested. In disguise David goes to the prison and is himself forced to add their names to the list of those entered for execution the next day. He bribes the gipsy jailor to save St. Ange, but needs a further two hundred crowns if Charles also is to be saved; borrows the sum and is then tempted to gamble that he may get more money for the flight—gambles and loses that which he had borrowed! Past the gaming-place the tumbrils go bearing the victims to

the guillotine, and David sees the brother whose chance of safety he has sacrificed. He would fling himself from the window but is prevented, raves and announces that he is a suspect with a price on his head. As he collapses there are cries from the street that Robespierre has fallen, that the last batch of victims has been released at the very foot of the guillotine, and Charles and Violette come in as the wretched man dies. It is a vivid drama based on an anecdote for which the author was indebted to a friend, though he modified the horror of the story, saying :

“ I have endeavoured to display a social evil with less distress to my audience and readers (if, in these disastrous times, it may not be thought quixotic in a playwright to hope for readers) than was warranted by the horror of the original event. In the tragedy of real life, the brother, the victim of the gamester, was guillotined, and the prototype of David lingered and died a maniac. Names might be given ; but are, for obvious reasons, withheld. The friend who acquainted me with the story had it from the lips of a late distinguished member of the French bar, who, in the reign of terror, was fellow-prisoner with the brother sacrificed to ‘ the hazard of the die.’ ”

The fourth of these plays, *The Man's an Ass*, is a very diverting farce presenting a story not without hints taken from Apuleius in that it shows a man supposed to be translated into an ass. The pretence is made by a hungry fellow who, having removed a miller's ass, puts

himself in its place in the hope that he may partake of a feast which the miller is preparing. But it so happens that it is the miller's wedding-day, that on the journey home Angelino, the ass, has been refractory and thrown the bride and so is to die—the butcher has indeed already been sent for! Thus come some amusing scenes developed in quick and easy dialogue, as the ruthless miller determines that the deed shall be done and the man who claims to have been the ass is brought to the conclusion that: "He who quits even parched peas and safety to eat a savoury dish in noise and danger—though he may have the wisdom of the seven sages, the learning of all the schools, still is such a man only a—a—in a word The Man's an Ass." It is sheer farce, farce the instant condemnation of which it is not now easy to understand, unless one of the actors was responsible for the "ticklish turn."

In this year Douglas Jerrold was active as a Freemason;¹ he had begun contributing to *The Freemason's Quarterly* in 1834, and in 1835 was represented in each number of that miscellany. On May 29 a performance was

¹ His Masonic "record" was as follows: On November 10, 1831, Bro. Jerrold was initiated in the Bank of England Lodge, No. 329, which met at the Horn Tavern, Doctors' Commons, and continued a member until June 1836. He joined the Lodge of Concord, No. 49, in March 1838, and appears to have left it in December 1844. This last-named Lodge has made no return since 1849, and the charter cannot be traced.—*Freemason's Monthly Magazine*, July 1857.

given at the English Opera House in aid of the Asylum for Aged Freemasons, and one of the brethren recited an address "written for the occasion by Brother Douglas Jerrold." The address is only one of several which he wrote at different times for the same beneficent purpose, and may be given here as a specimen of them all, as an illustration of the writer's happy fancy in dealing with a seemingly matter-of-fact subject :

" In types we speak ; by tokens, secret ways,
We teach the wisdom of primeval days.
To-night, 'tis true, no myst'ry we rehearse,
Yet—hear a parable in homely verse.

A noble ship lay found'ring in the main,
The hapless victim of the hurricane ;
Her crew—her passengers—with savage strife,
Crowd in the boat that bears them on to life ;
They see the shore—again they press the strand—
A happy spot—a sunny, fertile land !

But say—have all escaped the 'whelming wave ?
Is no one left within a briny grave ?

Some few old men, too weak to creep on deck,
Lie in the ocean coffin'd in the wreck.
They had no child to pluck them from the tide,
And so unaided, unremembered, died.
But orphan babes are rescued from the sea
By the strong arm of human sympathy ;
For in their looks—their heart-compelling tears—
There speaks an eloquence denied to years.
The shipwrecked men, inhabiting an isle,
Lovely and bright with bounteous Nature's smile,
And richly teeming with her fairest things,
Ripe, luscious fruits, and medicinal springs,

Must yet provide against the changing day,
 The night's dank dew, the mountain's scorching ray;
 For Nature giving, still of men demands
 The cheerful industry of willing hands.

But some there are among our shipwrecked crowd
 Spent of their strength—by age, by sickness, bowed;
 Forlorn old men in childhood's second birth,
 Poor broken images of Adam's earth!
 Of what avails the riches 'bout them thrown,
 If wanting means to make one gift their own?
 To him what yields the juicy fruit sublime,
 Who sees the tree but needs the strength to climb?
 To him what health can healing waters bring
 Who palsied lies, and cannot reach the spring?
 Must they then starve with plenty in their eye?
 Near health's own fountain must they groan and die?
 Whilst in that isle each beast shall find a den,
 Shall no roof house our desolate old men?
 There shall!

(*To Audience*)

I see the builders throng around,
 With line and rule prepared to mark the ground;
 Nor lack these gentlest wishes—hands most fair,
 To join the master in his fervent prayer;
 But with instinctive goodness crowd to-night,
 Smiling approval of our solemn rite,
 The noblest daughters of this favoured isle!—
 And virtue labours, cheered by beauty's smile,
 The stone is laid—the temple is begun—
 Help! and its walls will glitter in the sun.
 There, 'neath its roof, will charity assuage
 The clinging ills of poor dependent age;
 There, 'neath acacia boughs, will old men walk
 And, calmly waiting death, with angels talk."

The address which he wrote for the following year's Festival, *The Grey Head*, was set to music by Reeve and published as a song.

It was somewhere about the year 1835 that Douglas Jerrold first met Charles Dickens, then descriptive reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*, and two or three years later to wake one fine morning to find himself famous as the author of the *Pickwick Papers*. How the first meeting was brought about cannot now be said. Jerrold already knew John Forster well, but Dickens did not meet him until the close of 1836. It was probably some other friend who sent "Boz" out to Little Chelsea to make the acquaintance of a writer eight years his senior, one who had already gained a prominent position among the dramatists of the time, and whose name must have been familiar to his visitor as that of a frequent contributor to the leading magazines. Dickens himself recorded his impression of this first meeting: "I remember very well that when I first saw him in about the year 1835—when I went into his sick room in Thistle Grove, Brompton, and found him propped up in a great chair, bright-eyed and quick and eager in spirit, but very lame in body, he gave me an impression of tenderness. It never became dissociated from him." The meeting that then took place was a significant one, for the young men became close friends, and remained such—with one brief break—to the end of life.

It was, perhaps, during this illness that Douglas Jerrold illustrated what has been later termed, "the will to live," in a way which

came to be recorded in a medical work of a few years later :

“ That mysterious and incomprehensible thing, the *will*, has, we know, an important influence on the whole animal economy, and many instances have come before us where it has staved off insanity; others where it has aided in restoring health. I will cite a case which is well known to me, and which exemplifies this action, although unconnected with insanity. A celebrated man of literature, dependent for his income on the labours of his pen—feeding his family, as he jocularly calls it, out of an inkstand—was in the advanced stage of a severe illness. After many hesitations, he ventured to ask his medical attendant if there remained any hope. The doctor evaded the embarrassing question as long as possible, but at last was compelled sorrowfully to acknowledge that there was none.

“ ‘ What ! ’ said the patient, ‘ die, and leave my wife and five helpless children ! By ——, I won’t die ! ’

“ If there be oaths which the recording angel is ashamed to write down, this was one of them. The patient got better from that hour.”¹

The following letter, written from Thistle Grove on August 6, 1835, was addressed to W. H. Harrison, evidently the editor of the *Freemason’s Quarterly*, in which the article referred to made its appearance. *The Trial of Shakespeare*, was, there can be no doubt, Walter Savage Landor’s *Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare and Others for*

¹ A. L. Wigan, M.D.

Deer Stealing, which had been published (by Saunders, not Bentley) during the previous year :

“MY DEAR SIR,—*The Trial of Shakespeare* was, I think, published by Bentley. I have only read extracts from it in reviews : and though I therein recognized *nothing similar to my little sketch*, nevertheless the publication of the book does, on consideration, seem to preoccupy the subject. I concluded that you had seen something of the volume, or should before have pointed it out to you. If you please—for I confess myself somewhat thin-skinned under any charge of plagiarism, the more especially when unmerited—you may omit the first legend.

“For the second ; it has never yet seen the light ; nor am I aware of the existence of any essay to which even the uncharitableness of criticism might imagine a resemblance.

“It struck me in sending it, that were it more broken up into paragraphs—as new subjects are introduced—it would be more effective. As it is, the images, crowding so closely upon each other—(whilst the spirit of the essay depends upon the distinctness with which they represent the several plays)—may give surprise and thus fail to satisfy the reader. If you think with me, and will again favour me with the proof, I will make the alterations with as little trouble as possible to the printer. There being now only one legend, I should call the paper *Shakespeare at Bankside*.

“I am, my dear Sir,

“Yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

This note is interesting, not only as showing that the two “legends,” *Shakespeare at Charl-*

*cote Park*¹ and *Shakespeare at Bankside*² were originally to be published together, but also on account of the seal with which it was fastened—a profile of Shakespeare. The seal from which this impression was taken, a finely cut cameo in a bone handle, is in my possession, a precious relic testifying to Douglas Jerrold's love of the national poet, and possibly representing the common seal of the Mulberry Club. Harrison did not, apparently, think that the Charlcote Park fancy was sufficiently like Landor's work—as apart from similarity of theme it certainly is not—to forbid its use, and it duly appeared in the December number of his magazine, though it is worthy of note that the author's thin-skinnedness “under any charge of plagiary” prevented him from including it along with its companion piece in the volumes he published a few years later.

Some time during the autumn of 1835 Douglas Jerrold again went to Paris, for the next letter is dated thence to John Forster, and its tenor suggests that the writer contemplated making a long stay in the French capital, presumably as a kind of Paris correspondent of the *New Monthly Magazine*.

“Paris, December 12 [1835].
“Hotel de la Bibliotheque, Rue St. Nicoise.

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I send this through the office of the Ambassador—by which means I am

¹ The *Handbook of Swindling and other Papers*, 1891.

² *Cakes and Ale*, 1842.

promised the advantage of all future communications with England from *here*. Wigan will transmit me anything from you by Barnett's brother who leaves London in a few days. I have seen Thackeray : he called upon me (on hearing of my arrival) and gave me a most cordial greeting ; with offers of introduction, etc.

“ I think I can send you a few tolerable pages of gossip for the *N.M.* for the present month. As I become more familiar with Parisian matters, and get more into society—which I find opening in many unexpected ways upon me—I have no doubt I can render a monthly commentary more acceptable. Has Hall vouchsafed his opinion of my offer ?

“ I have some hopes of being able to produce a drama at the *Théâtre Français* ; of course, in conjunction with a French author, who will translate my piece, and share profits. I think I have a very catholic subject wherewith to try the experiment. It may appear a fiction, but dramatists here eat, drink, dress and dwell like gentlemen. All I have read of theatrical affairs in London since my departure confirms me in the opinion of the prudence of that step. Osbaldiston is incorrigible, and for Drury Lane, who can write against steel armour ?

“ Since I have been here, I have written a couple of papers for Blackwood and am now at work upon my novel. (Should goosequills rise in Paris, you will know to whom to attribute the advance.) By-the-way, will you in your literary news in the *N.M.* give a line on that fact (I mean the novel)—a circumstance so important to the world of letters ? I have, however, a reason for wishing certain people to know that I am about to publish : that I am not idle.

“ This is a dull, stupid, barren letter ; but the

subject (myself) affords nothing better. My next, however, shall sparkle with diamond dust.

“ Yours, my dear Forster, ever truly,
 “ DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“ I am sure you will be glad to know that the notice in the *Examiner* on that little Shakespearean paper of mine has produced for me—here, in the good city of Paris—more than one new and congratulatory acquaintance.

“ I presume, if you have my paper for the *N.M.* by the 23rd 'twill be time enough? *Depend upon it*—'twill make some six or seven pages.”

That letter is interesting for a variety of reasons—incidentally it suggests that Forster had some official connection with the *New Monthly Magazine*,¹ possibly he may have acted for a time as sub-editor. Hall, who had vouchsafed no reply to the proposal, was Samuel Carter Hall, and he apparently did not agree to the offer of gossip from Paris—certainly none appeared in the number for which Jerrold said his copy could be depended upon, nor indeed did any of his work appear in the *New Monthly* until after the change of editorship.

¹ The *New Monthly Magazine* was edited by Thomas Campbell 1820–30, by Samuel Carter Hall (with a few months of Lytton Bulwer's editing) 1830–36, by Theodore Hook 1836–41, and by Thomas Hood 1841–43. This letter suggests that John Forster was exercising some control over the magazine; he was certainly a great friend of its owner-publisher, Henry Colburn, whose widow he married, but his biographers do not allude to any connection with the *New Monthly Magazine*.

On December 21, 1835, *Doves in a Cage*, a new comedy of Douglas Jerrold's, was produced at the Adelphi, and enjoyed considerable popularity, which, as a friendly critic said, it richly deserved. That news of its success was a pleasant Christmas gift to the author away in Paris may be gathered from the note, dated from the French capital December 27, attached to the printed play, which was evidently immediately prepared for publication :

“The cordiality with which this little play has been received by an audience (and an Adelphi audience !) may afford a promise of better days to the despairing British dramatist, at present all but excluded from his native stage by foreign music and translated spectacle. It is manifest that even an attempt, however feebly executed, to trust to the simplicity of comedy—depending neither upon the glories of the scene painter nor the cunning of the machinist—will be encouragingly accepted by the theatrical public, continually libelled as caring for nothing save processions and panoramas—steeds of neighing flesh and steeds of ‘bronze’; to be delighted only when the mask of comedy is exchanged for a masquerade, and the bowl of tragedy enlarged into a brazen cauldron.”

The scenes of this play are all laid in, or in the neighbourhood of, the Fleet Prison, at the time of the Restoration. One Prosper, a spendthrift gallant who has been secretly wooing Mabillah, the niece and heiress of the wealthy merchant Bezant, is laid by the heels

by his creditors in the Fleet, getting (with an officer in attendance) an occasional few hours out to pursue his wooing. Sables, an old merchant, seeks to wed Mabillah, and to further his suit she is arrested and put in the Fleet that he may win as benefactor what he could not gain as wooer. When the inevitable meeting between the lovers takes place in the prison, Cherub—a Fleet hanger-on—makes each believe that the other is there on a philanthropic errand, and it is only later when, the two being permitted out under observation, they meet again in the house of the Fleet parson, where Sables hopes to make sure of his young bride, that Prosper learns that the girl is penniless. Though he has started as a fortune-hunter he proves a true lover, and taken back to the Fleet refuses to accept payment of all his debts and freedom on the condition that he gives up Mabillah and goes abroad. Then he hears that the girl's uncle is ruined, sees her brought into the Fleet—and, to save her, signs the bond which would compel her to accept her old wooer, which she has pledged herself to do if her lover, in whom she has the strongest faith, agrees. Prosper has accepted the terms to save her from the prison from which he had refused to save himself. Then the uncle comes forward, returns the bond, and explains that it has merely been a trial of their affections—he is not ruined: “It was my wish to teach you the true knowledge of each other—’twas for that you here

encountered; for well I knew that they who in hours of gaiety and freedom seem mere birds of idle song, touched by adversity become—doves in a cage.”

There are many ready hits in the give-and-take of the dialogue. Cherub says of Carbuncle, the Fleet parson, “He’ll talk of marriage till you almost think there’s little harm in it. . . . It’s hard to pass him and walk on a bachelor;” and from his experience of the Fleet finds the philosophy, “Depend on’t, there’s nothing like a prison pavement to ring our old friends upon.” (Here the author was doubtless recalling his own recent experiences.) Says Prosper of Mabillah, “like the girl in the story, she speaks pearls and diamonds;” “I wish you joy, sir,” comes the reply, “that’s a wife you’ll never blame for talking.” Stephen, a countryman who has just been married by the Fleet parson, asks him, “Please you, sir, and truly now—my wedding knot, is it fast tied?” “Fast!” says Carbuncle, “so fast, the king in his robes, with the crown on his head, and his sword of justice in his hand, could not cut it.” “Not with the sword of justice?” echoes the lout. “Not even with the sword of mercy,” says Carbuncle, having securely pocketed his fee.

CHAPTER IX

AN EXPERIMENT—"MEN OF CHARACTER"—
"THE HANDBOOK OF SWINDLING"

1836—1839

THE hope, possibly but shortly indulged, of establishing himself in Paris as correspondent was not fulfilled, and within a few weeks of writing his letter to Forster Douglas Jerrold was home again at Thistle Grove, and about to engage in a new enterprise. Thence he replied on February 5, 1836, to a letter from the secretary of the Cambridge Garrick Club, which informed him that it had been proposed to make him an honorary member of that body. With evident pleasure at the honour done him the dramatist wrote :

"SIR,—I must plead absence from home in excuse of this delayed acknowledgement of your favour of the 28th ult.

"I shall feel much gratification at being found worthy of admission into a Society, the enlightened objects of which are the encouragement of a dramatic *literature* in opposition to a state of things at present warring with its very existence. When translation, spectacle and foreign opera have all but excluded the intellect of the country from the theatre—it is cheering to find a body, such as the Cambridge

Garrick Club, actively strong in the good cause—strenuously supporting ‘the simple way—the good old plan.’ Wishing the Club great and speedy success in its high purpose,

“I remain, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

The dramatist was duly elected on February 22 a “free and Honorary Member of the Club.”¹

In *The Album of the Cambridge Garrick Club* for 1836, Jerrold’s verses on *Shakespeare’s Crab Tree* are printed with a note stating that they “have the authority of a legend current at Stratford-on-Avon, though probably not generally known.” In the same volume will be found the following short notice of “Mr. Douglas Jerrold and Mr. Clarkson Stanfield, R.A. (with an etching from an original portrait of Mr. Jerrold in his own possession).” A note is appended to the portrait of Jerrold to the effect that it is believed to be the first ever published.

“Some eighteen years ago,” runs this brief record, “two heedless boys, yeapt ‘Middies’ on board the *Namur*, one of the old First of June timbers, practised, as may readily be believed, all the freaks and follies for which the cockpit was once so renowned. Jerrold, albeit not even yet of herculean frame, had even then less than the appearance of a stripling, but the blood of Douglas would protect itself in the contentions of

¹ The Cambridge Garrick Club gave performances of Jerrold’s *Law and Lions* in the following May and June.

boyhood; and it would seem that the son of an actor could usurp, as a patronymic, what as author he has since become entitled to claim in dramatic right. In the cockpit the Middy Jerrold would 'strut his hour on the stage,' and aspired to the important character of the Robber in the *Iron Chest*. Stanfield was scene painter to the company, principal decorator and master of the ceremonies to the gentlemen and ladies who might be selected from such as, at the period we describe, were in the habit of visiting a man-of-war. Stanfield now ranks the very first in that branch of the profession which he may be truly said to have created; while Jerrold takes the lead as a dramatist, and naturally enough, in nautical drama, makes the sea talk. Pause reader, and think."

That brief note, it may be mentioned, was lifted bodily from the *Freemason's Quarterly*.

The new enterprise into which Douglas Jerrold entered was the dual one of acting and theatrical management. William John Hammond, who had some years earlier married Jerrold's sister Jane, had been lessee of the little Liver Theatre at Liverpool for three or four years, and while retaining his interest in that and the Doncaster Theatre, moved to London, where he and Jerrold together took the Strand Theatre. It was an interesting experiment in actor-management, for Hammond was an actor, his wife was an actress, and Douglas Jerrold came to the partnership in the triple capacity of part-lessee, playwright and actor. Only the year before the Strand Theatre had been compelled to close its doors

in consequence of the action of a common informer. The particular evasion of the law here was selling tickets at the theatre for another playhouse—tickets which *also* admitted the bearer to the Strand Theatre! By this time the danger of such a contretemps was done away with and it was duly announced that “the little theatre in the Strand has at last obtained a legal right to a money-taker and a company of comedians. We hope the office of the first will be no sinecure, for we cannot doubt that the exertions of the second will be well directed by the new lessees; to wit Mr. J. W. Hammond,¹ a lively and agreeable comedian from Liverpool, and Mr. Douglas Jerrold, a dramatist who is henceforth to be known as a tragedian also.” That Hammond had a ready humour is suggested by the following anecdote taken from a newspaper of 1838: Hammond of the Strand Theatre observing Salter the comedian to be a little behind time at rehearsal, gave him one of those managerial glances which the latter well knew to be significant. “I was nabbed by a shower of rain in the city,” said Salter, “and therefore stood up till it was over.” “My boy,” retorted Hammond, “you had better have attended to your business here. You may walk through the city all your days and nobody will mistake you for a *dry* salter.”

With this auspicious combination the doors

¹ Should be W. J. Hammond, but I have not infrequently come across his initials thus transposed.

of the theatre were opened on April 25, and the curtain went up on two new pieces from Jerrold's pen—a tragic play, *The Painter of Ghent*, and a rollicking farcical comedy, *The Man for the Ladies*. In the first of these the author himself sustained the principal character in a way which thoroughly justified the attempt—his acting being “marked with strong intellect and quick sensibility”—while in the second play Hammond took the chief part. Jerrold was scarcely the man for an actor's life—especially seeing that he was busy with the pen at the same time, and the nightly task was sure to pall. It was, indeed, only for a couple of weeks that he impersonated his creation, and in after years was known to refer to this experiment as his “folly,” as a kind of escapade out of which he had come as well as he deserved. In a *Theatrical Alphabet*, published shortly afterwards, the episode was celebrated in the following clumsy couplet—

“I is an Ivanhoff—I like his voice,

J, Jerrold who played a few evenings from choice.”

While Hammond and Jerrold continued their joint tenancy of the Strand Theatre, the two families lived in a house at the lower end of Essex Street, Strand, at the top of the steps leading to the riverside. During the time of the partnership besides the plays named the following pieces of Jerrold's were produced: *The Bill-Sticker*; *The Peril of Pippins*, “a travestic drama in four acts,” and *The Gallantee Showman*,

or, *Mr. Peppercorn at Home*, both founded upon his own magazine sketches. On December 16 "Brothers Hammond and Jerrold" lent their theatre to the Bank of England Lodge for an amateur performance for the benefit of a Masonic charity.

When the season came to an end an address to the public, evidently written by the dramatist, was delivered by the actor-manager :

" We began with a tragic drama, *The Painter of Ghent* ; but as the aspect of the boxes and pit was much more tragic than we could wish, we in sailor's phrase ' let go the painter.' We tried something like a ballet, which, after a few nights (but purely out of mercy to the reputation of Taglioni and Perrot), we withdrew. We found that our legs were not very good, and so we resolved to produce a comedy of words and character, in other phrase, mistrusting our legs, we resolved henceforth to stand only upon our—head. . . . We dedicate this theatre to comedy and farce. We shall endeavour to ' catch the living manners as they rise ' ; though, with respect for pre-occupied ground we shall select no cases from the Old Bailey. And should there happen so unto-ward an event as a war with France, be under no apprehension for your supplies, as we depend upon no emissary in Paris."

At about this time, according to the late Henry Vizetelly, with Jerrold's friends it was an open secret that he was also the contributor of some biting comments to the columns of the " grandmotherly " *Morning*

Herald. Vizetelly goes on to say that it was about the mid-'thirties, when he and young John Leech lived as fellow apprentices in the house of Orrin Smith, the engraver, that he first met Douglas Jerrold, who, with his close friend, Laman Blanchard, was a rather frequent guest at Orrin Smith's dinner-table. Another friend in the same circle was a promising young artist, Edward Chatfield by name, who was also a member of the Mulberry Club. It may have been Chatfield who painted the portrait of Jerrold which is reproduced as frontispiece to this volume. Personal glimpses of Jerrold during these earlier years of his career as a successful writer for the magazines and the stage are all too few, and therefore it will not be out of place to quote the reminiscences of the veteran engraver-publisher. He speaks of Douglas Jerrold as :

“ a youngish man of three or four-and-thirty. [He was thirty-four on January 3, 1837.] There was a peculiarity about his personal appearance certain to strike even the most casual observer. His small, and even then slightly stooping figure, his head with its long light falling hair, which in moments of excitement he tossed about as a lion does its mane, and his prominent searching blue eyes that seemed to penetrate everywhere, invariably attracted the attention of strangers. He was a great gain to any company, for he always enlivened the dullest of conversation with his irrepressible wit. The many good things he said were evidently unpremeditated. They escaped from his lips on the spur of the moment,

instead of being ingeniously led up to after the manner of professional wits. Even his puns were singularly felicitous and far beyond most feats of verbal cleverness."

This scrap from Vizetelly's *Glances Back Through Seventy Years* is interesting not only on account of the glimpse which it gives us of the personality of Douglas Jerrold at this time of his life, but also as the earliest recognition of him as a conversational wit. That he had already given evidence of ready repartee we have seen once or twice in the preceding pages, but it was especially during the time that he was a successful and prominent author, journalist and dramatist that he came to be recognized as a "wit." A dangerous recognition for him, if we are to believe his own gloss on the proverb "Give a dog a bad name and hang him," "now certainly the shortest and worst name you can give him is—wit." Nearly all the people who met him either casually or frequently during the last twenty years of his life have recorded the remarkable impression made by his ready wit.

For three or four years Jerrold made no fresh appearance as dramatist, and indeed, with the exception of *The Painter of Ghent*, the pieces which he wrote during 1836 and 1837 were not altogether worthy of the reputation or of the powers of which he had many times shown himself to be undoubtedly possessed. The "lengthened leave of the drama" to which he had looked forward some years

earlier was in the long run useful to him, and, as we shall see, resulted in the production of a fresh brilliant series of comedies. But if not devoting his own attention to the stage, he was evidently ready to render assistance to a friend, for in November of 1837 a nautical drama entitled *Wapping Old Stairs* was produced at the Haymarket Theatre and was introduced by the author, Henry Holl, in the following words: "I am happy in acknowledging the obligation I am under to my friend Mr. Jerrold for the suggestion of the idea of this piece. I have not only to thank him for the suggestion of the subject, but for the pleasure of being, as I trust I always shall be, his sincere friend."

It was of this Henry Holl—uncle of Frank Holl the painter—who quitted the stage and re-started life as a wine-merchant, that Jerrold said in discussing the change with a friend: "Ay, and I hear that his wine off the stage is better than his whine on it."

At the beginning of 1838 Douglas Jerrold published his first work in volume form—unless we count his plays, many of which had been issued from time to time. He was then thirty-five years of age, so that he had, to use his own conceit, been in no hurry to take the shutters down before there was something in the window. The three volumes (it was during the very heyday of the three-volume system) with which he first sought the suffrages of the book-buying public were entitled *Men of Char-*

acter, and they comprised nine fiction-sketches which had appeared in the pages of *Blackwood's* and other magazines. The nine "men of character" whose stories are told in these volumes need not detain us, for they are all to be found in Jerrold's collected works except *Titus Trumps*, the *Man of Many Hopes*, and his place is taken by *Christopher Snub who was "born to be hanged."* The quaint preface is not given with the *Men* in their re-issued form, and therefore no apology is necessary for quoting it in its brief entirety :

"John British, in the bigness of his heart, sat with his doors open to all comers, though we will not deny that the welcome bestowed upon his guests depended not always so much upon their deserving merits, as upon their readiness to flatter their host in any of the thousand whims to which, since truth should be said, John was given. Hence a bold, empty-headed talker would sometimes be placed on the right hand of John—would be helped to the choicest morsels, and would drink from out the golden goblet of the host—whilst the meek wise man might be suffered to stare hungrily from a corner, or at best pick bits and scraps off a wooden trencher. With all this, John was a generous fellow; for no sooner was he convinced of the true value of his guest than he would hasten to make profuse amends for past neglect, setting the worthy in the seat of honour, and doing him all graceful reverence. In his time John had assuredly made grievous blunders : now twitting him as a zany or a lunatic, who, in after years, was John's best councillor—his blithe companion : now stopping his ears at what,

in his rash ignorance, he called a silly goose, that in later days, became to John the sweetest nightingale.

“John has blundered it is true. It is as true that he has rewarded those he has wronged; and if—for it *has* happened—the injured have been far removed from the want of cakes and ale, has not John put his hand into his pocket, and with a conciliatory, penitent air promised a tombstone? To our matter—

“Once upon a time two or three fellows—‘Men of Character,’ as they afterwards dubbed themselves—ventured into the presence of John British. Of the merits of these worthies it is not for us to speak, being, unhappily, related to them. That their reception was very far beyond their deserts, or that their effrontery is of the choicest order, may be gathered from this circumstance; they now bring newcomers—other ‘men,’ never before presented to the house of John, and pray of him to listen to the histories of the strangers and at his own ‘sweet will’ to bid them pack, or to entertain them.”¹

The three volumes, which contain some happy examples of the author’s power of writing short stories, rich at once in satire and quaint philosophy, have come to have a special value from the collector’s point of view on account of the dozen plates from the pencil of W. M. Thackeray with which they were illustrated—plates the originals of which (with one unused) are in the Forster Collection at South Kensington. Those water-colour originals are delightful examples of

¹ *Men of Character*, it may be said, was published in a Russian translation during the first year of the Crimean War.

Thackeray's pictorial humour, but the reproductions in the volumes are so woodeny that a reader might well have thought that the stories in which they were set would have been better unadorned than so adorned. Happily the illustrator found out in time that he had mistaken his vocation, and the result was that the greatest novelist of his generation eventually took his proper place, and utilized his humorous pencil for the play of fancy more than for the work of illustration.

The author had by now quitted Chelsea and was residing on Haverstock Hill—Sinton's Nursery—whence the preface to *Men of Character* is dated in January. Here he was visited either in the preceding or following summer by Henry Mayhew, whom he had met in Barnett's rooms in Paris, and who has left this pleasant glimpse of what Haverstock Hill was like over seventy years ago :

“ On my return to town I soon made out the little man again, and found him located in a market-gardener's house, up at Haverstock Hill, revelling day by day in the perfume of the acres of roses in which his new homestead was literally embedded. For the sense of smell in Jerrold was exquisitely acute; so that it did one's heart good to walk round the nursery grounds with him, and watch his nostrils work as he kept sniffing up now the rich aroma of the 'attar' vapour diffused through the air—then, drinking in the odour of the clematis, as though he really tasted the essence of it—and then feasting his nose with the cherry-pie-like scent of the heliotrope.”

In February 1838 the correspondence with Forster was renewed with the following brief note. There is, it will be observed, a gap of years in the existing letters between these two. Jerrold had during that time been abroad, and had removed his residence, but when in town it is quite likely that they saw one another frequently at their clubs, at the Wrekin Tavern in Broad Court, Drury Lane—a place much frequented at the time by the literary men of the day—and at other resorts. The particular Club referred to in the note may have been the Mulberries, or one of the various social coteries which Jerrold himself was largely influential in forming. It is written from Haverstock Hill :

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—I have ventured to promise my juveniles Covent Garden on Monday next; they are the most enviable of mortals, never having seen a pantomime, yet big with the thoughts of it! Will you get me the box from Macready, and drop me a line here, or (should you be at the Piazza on Saturday) resolve me at the Club? For the party—we are seven. I have not yet been able to get an evening in town in your service, but name any night (save Monday) and place next week. Colburn has, of course, sent you my nothing by this time.

“Yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

The next note, also to Forster, is dated March 19 :

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—Can you—without feeling that you are asking too much—obtain me the box,

for Thursday, for *Lady of Lyons*? And if so will you drop me the document per post, time enough for me to transmit it to the party by the same medium? I have been an invalid ever since I saw you, or should have been at the Club on Saturday.

“ Yours truly,

“ D. JERROLD.”

“ I have been an invalid ”—this is a recurring note, for from early manhood Jerrold seems to have been a victim of rheumatism in various forms. But despite ill-health he was busy with the pen, and during the spring completed a new play. This play seems to be glanced at in an undated letter to Benjamin Webster asking “*when* can you hear my comedy?” and whether there is a nook in the theatre for that night for his human belongings—“any way I shall send them on the chance, and in the course of the evening, descend like a mountain torrent upon your dressing-room, sweeping your flocks and herds.” In a postscript Jerrold added: “I have written a new verse for ‘God Save the Queen,’ in which I have (I think) very neatly introduced Her Majesty’s new box, retiring room and gold sandwich-case—would you let me sing it to an oboe accompaniment?” The play was read and duly produced—but judging by the following letter to Webster, not duly honoured—at the Haymarket:

“ May 23 [1838], *Haverstock Hall*.

“ MY DEAR WEBSTER,—After half-an-hour’s earnest application at the bill, I did yesterday discover

my unhappy *Mother* cruelly jammed in the posters between the *White Horse* and *Mr. Willis Jones*. Can't you allow the lady a little more elbow-room? I have as great a contempt as anybody can have for the vanity of large type, and all the seductive arts of the printer, but as it has been and is *the system*, and as things are, by the judicious public, *prejudged* by the size of the letter they are announced in, I think I may put in my claim for equal courtesy with the author of *Rory O'More*, both as to dramatic success and dramatic standing.

"I write this in perfect good humour, notwithstanding a sense of my filial obligations compels me to ask for better treatment of my *Mother*.

"Yours truly,

"D. JERROLD."

Beyond that letter to the actor-manager-playwright, Benjamin Webster, and a few press notices, but little is recoverable about the simply named drama which was produced at the Haymarket on May 31, 1838. The following paragraph from an obscure little periodical entitled *Actors by Daylight* is only tantalizing: "The long-promised drama by Jerrold was produced: the plot is very slender, and were not the incidents clothed in the most charming and eloquent language that ever emanated from the pen of Jerrold, we should have some doubt of its success." One of the press notices—from the *Theatrical Observer*—gives something of the story:

"A new drama, in two acts, called *The Mother*, from the pen of Douglas Jerrold, author of *The Rent*

Day, etc., was produced at the Haymarket Theatre last night, and went off with unanimous applause. It is said to be founded on a fact; the following is the story: a Captain Davenant (E. Glover) and his lady Eulalie (Celeste), at the opening of the drama are childless, their only one, having, as they suppose, died when an infant. This is a source of great grief to them, especially to Eulalie, who, being very much struck with the beauty of a gipsy child, is made to believe that it is the result of an illicit intercourse between her husband and a gipsy girl (Miss Cooper). This almost drives Eulalie distracted, but it is eventually proved to her great delight that she herself is the *mother* of the child, it having been stolen by one of the tribe, out of revenge for a supposed injury inflicted on her son by the father of Captain Davenant.

“ This serious business was relieved by the drollery of Larceny, a part rendered highly amusing by the acting of Mr. Buckstone. Celeste, as the Mother, played with great feeling, and was warmly applauded; when she came forward at the call of the audience, at the end of the piece, not contenting herself with silently curtseying her thanks, she said, ‘ Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you from the bottom of *your* heart (my heart), for your kind indulgence.’ We must not omit to mention that Webster gave great importance to a trifling part, that of a very old man, by his admirable acting. Strickland also deserves praise for his clever impersonation of a sailor. As a drama we do not think it equal to either the *Rent Day* or the *Housekeeper*, but it contains some good writing, and will doubtless prove attractive for a time. . . . Despite the storm that fell just as the doors opened, there was a good house.”

Despite its good reception—on the second performance it was received “with great applause”—*The Mother* was only acted eight times when it was withdrawn owing to Madame Celeste’s departure to fulfil a provincial engagement, and was not revived.

During this summer of 1838 Charles Dickens occupied a cottage at Twickenham—a house still standing, near to St. Margaret’s railway station—and there Jerrold, Thackeray, Talfourd, Forster, Maclise, and other kindred spirits were wont to visit the already popular author of *Pickwick*, and to take part in those boyish games and fun in which several of them, endowed with youthful spirits to the last, were always ready to indulge. There, too, in “the feast of reason and the flow of soul,” this group of talented men sharpened each other’s wits, like knives, to use Mrs. Procter’s happy expression.

In the autumn, probably after a holiday spent in Paris, Douglas Jerrold removed from his rose-embowered house at Haverstock Hill to 8, Lower Craven Place, Kentish Town, whence he wrote as follows on August 28 :

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—Accompanying this are your two books, for which many thanks. I continue hard at work—the last week almost finished Act I—have been taken from it for a few days, but have no doubt of finishing Act III by [the] middle of September. I will, however, give you [a look] in and report progress. I think I have more than kept up to Act I.

“Yours faithfully,

“D. JERROLD.”

Douglas Jerrold was far from being so careful a correspondent as his friend Dickens, who gave the date of each letter he wrote written out in full, instead of trusting to figures. Jerrold, as often as not, put no date at all, and frequently only the day of the week or month. On the note just quoted, for example, he put no year, but Forster has added 1838. Possibly the date should be a year later, and the play the unacted *Spendthrift*; no further piece of his was put on the stage until 1841.

In *Blackwood's Magazine* for October there appeared a poem by Douglas Jerrold entitled *The Rocking Horse*, dated as written in "Paris, 1838," and as the date agrees with the reference to the writer's younger daughter's age it may safely be assumed that some time during the year the family was staying in the French capital. *The Rocking Horse* was suggested by a remark made by Jerrold's four-year-old daughter Mary, with whom he was walking in the Tuileries Gardens. A verse or two may well be selected from the score or so of stanzas as illustration of the author's manner of blending the playful and serious:

"One morning, Indolence my guide,
This garden ground I trod,
With maiden tripping at my side
Some four years old and odd.

.
She spoke, and sombre thoughts grew bright
She laugh'd—'twas sorrow's knell;
As wicked imps, 'tis said, take flight,
At sound of holy bell."

The child, as children will, asked all manner of questions about "each marble faun, so lifelike in its air," disposed about the famous gardens, and at length paused astonished before "statues twain of Herculean size":

"That, trump in hand, rein each a steed
 Impatient of the check—
 A wingèd beast of fiery breed,
 And 'thunder-clothèd' neck.

The little maiden stood and gazed,
 Then cried with all her force,
 (And towards the steed her finger raised)
 'Pa, that's a rocking horse!'"

Other exclamations from the little prattler bring up recollections of the various monarchs who have dwelt in the palace of the Tuileries, and after a rapid account of these Jerrold finishes with:

"If thus, I thought, the lords of earth
 Are but the toys of fate,
 A passing ray their royal worth,
 And shadows all their state;

Let whosoever bridle Fame,
 Turk, Frenchman, Grecian, Norse—
 East, west, north, south—the steed's the same—
 'Tis but a—rocking-horse!"

During the autumn of 1838 a new magazine was started, and Forster was apparently concerned in its control. The article suggested in the following note does not appear to have been ever written, and it may well be that Douglas Jerrold scarcely possessed the

patience for investigating the matter as fully as it would have required, although he would doubtless have served up such information as was readily accessible in a fresh and entertaining fashion, with suggestive individual comment. The *Monthly Chronicle* continued in existence until 1841, but I cannot find that Jerrold ever became a contributor to its pages. The note is dated October 13, and is written from Lower Craven Place :

“MY DEAR FORSTER,—Since our last talk—of which, if you remember, the *Monthly Chronicle* made a part—it has struck me that I might be able to furnish an article or so to that work, should not the ground be wholly possessed by better men. I have for some time contemplated an essay on *The Songs of the People*—I mean the songs sung in streets, parlours of hostelrys, tap-rooms, yea, tea-gardens—the paper to embrace a view of the present state of public amusements with their influence on the mass. I know no work which I would so willingly make the repository of such an article as the *M.C.* I am not aware that anything has been written on the matter, and there are in truth some capital specimens of humour and rough satire in some of these lyrics of the people. What think you of the idea? I shall be your way in the course of a few days.

“Yours truly ever,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

In the summer of 1839 Jerrold made a trip to Boulogne—a place which long attracted him—to bring home for the holiday the two of his boys who were at school there. With

him were his friends Kenny Meadows the artist and Orrin Smith the engraver, the holiday perhaps being in the form of a celebrating of the success of a little venture in which they were all concerned—the periodical publication of certain *Heads of the People*. Jerrold's eldest son, then a boy of thirteen, wrote long after :

“ I remember his arrival well—how he took us from our school and sallied forth into the country with us, on a donkey expedition—he not the oldest boy present. Everything was delightful. He chatted gaily with the *paysanne* of a roadside *auberge* on the Calais road, and joked upon her sour cider. He listened laughingly to our stories of school fights, and to our disdain for the juvenile specimens of our lively neighbours. My brother [Edmund] described a hurt one of the boys had received. My father asked anxiously about it; whereupon my brother, to turn off the paternal sympathy, and prove in a word that the matter was not worth a moment's thought, added sharply : ‘ Oh, it's only a French boy, papa ! ’ Then a burst of laughter. We crossed back from Boulogne to Rye by steamer, and so to Hastings and London by coach.”

That holiday glimpse shows Jerrold in a characteristic mood when enjoying the abandon of change from work, and when in the society of children; for, as his new friend Charles Dickens recognized, “ in the company of children and young people he was particularly happy and showed to extraordinary advantage. He never was so gay, so sweet-

tempered, so pleasing and so pleased as then."

The close of the 'thirties marks a rest in Douglas Jerrold's work as dramatist. He was busy with his contributions to periodicals, and was engaged in preparing, in conjunction with a number of other writers, a series of papers under the title of *Heads of the People*. But before that work was ready the author had completed a brochure, *The Handbook of Swindling*, which was duly published with a plate by Phiz in 1839.¹ This booklet affords most entertaining reading, full of satire and sarcasm at the expense of all kinds of pretension. In detailing how the Swindler may best work his way in the world, the author inculcates morality as effectually as many a more direct preacher. The small volume is well worthy of its author's talents, although he appears to have thought but meanly of it, for not only was it issued pseudonymously as written by "Barabbas Whitefeather," and edited by "John Jackdaw," but its true authorship appears never to have been avowed during the life of Douglas Jerrold.

Jerrold had already identified himself with the cause of Liberalism in politics, although his influence as a writer on that side did not

¹ This small volume has become a prized rarity for collectors. It was not reprinted until 1891, when it formed—with other pieces by Douglas Jerrold—one of the volumes of the "Camelot Series" (after re-named "The Scott Library"). Later it has been included in a volume of the "World's Classics."

become notable until the latter part of his life. It was probably his known sympathy with all reform movements that gave rise to an unfounded rumour about this time that he and William Howitt were the moving spirits of the Co-operative League. "They were never seen or heard of in connection with that body," said the veteran reformer, George Jacob Holyoake, many years later.

At the Freemasons' Dinner of this year "Brother Jerrold, whose zeal and talents have been equally serviceable to the cause" again offered some happily conceived verses appropriate to the occasion. In November he visited Lord Lytton at his celebrated residence at Knebworth in Hertfordshire, and was there several times later, but never seems to have been on intimate terms with "the padded man that wears the stays."

That the little *Handbook of Swindling* was a success we may gather from a letter from the author to the publishers (Chapman & Hall), written from Lower Craven Place, on December 23, 1839 :

"MY DEAR SIRS,—I should have given you a call, but have been kept prisoner this past week by my old enemy—rheumatism. I am glad for many reasons that the *Handbook* subscribed so well. Whether it has been abused or *per contra*, I know not.

"An idea has struck me, which I think may be at the present time felicitously worked out in a little book, to be illustrated with little wood-designs, by

I, honor Cousin Henry

Kentish Town

Dec 23

My Dear Sir,

I should have given you a call, but have been kept
busy this past week by my old enemy, - rheumatism. I am glad for
many reasons, that the handbook sold so well. Whether it has been
abroad or for extra, I know not.

An idea has struck me, which I think may be
at the present time, felicitously worked out in a little book, to be illustrated
with little wood-designs, by the same dexter framer man; who is quite
ready. For little of books turn over.

This work is not to be considered as a catapenny, but
as a playful and satirical notice of the present state of all parties on the earth
after mining marriage - the philology of royal marriages, &c; as seen through
the unphilosophical vision of, say some New Zealander, for a time residing here;
and "done into English" by some John Dow.

I thought I would write you how much that you
might think of the matter, when - as I hope to be out in a day or two - it
can be decided upon. Yours truly

Douglas Jerrold

Over

the Comic Latin Grammar man; who is quite ready. For title of book turn over.

“This work is not to be considered as a catch-penny, but as a playful and satiric notice of the present state of all parties in the event of the coming marriage—the philosophy of royal marriages, etc.; as seen through the unsophisticated vision of, say, some New Zealander for a time residing here; and ‘done into English’ by some John Jackdaw.

“I thought I would write you thus much that you might think of the matter, when—as I hope to be out in a day or two—it can be decided upon.

“Yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“Blueacre (?) can stand over awhile.

THE
QUEEN'S WEDDING-RING

A

NATIONAL STORY

BY

A DISTINGUISHED STRANGER

RESIDING

IN ENGLAND

‘With this ring I thee wed—with my body I thee worship—and with all *my worldly goods* I thee endow.’

With Illustrations.”

It was exactly a month before that letter was written that Queen Victoria had announced to her Privy Council that she intended to marry Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, but I cannot find that during the few weeks that

preceded the great ceremony any little book such as Jerrold here proposed was ever issued; possibly the publishers did not think the project sufficiently promising. The "Comic Latin Grammar man" was John Leech, then a young man of two-and-twenty, who had presumably just completed the illustrating of that book of Percival Leigh's, and so doing had at once stepped into an acknowledged place among humorous draughtsmen. "Blue-acre" is the nearest reading that I can make of that which could "stand over," but what the reference means cannot be determined.

Kenny Meadows having drawn a number of characteristic "portraits" of the English, Orrin Smith the engraver, Tyas the publisher, and one of the Vizetellys, undertook at their joint risk to publish these illustrations, with accompanying essays, first in periodical numbers, and later in volume form. The editorial control was placed in Jerrold's hands, and towards the close of 1839 (it is dated 1840) the first series was completed and in the hands of the public, as *Heads of the People*.

No fewer than forty-three "portraits of the English" are contained in this first series, of which fifteen were from the pen of the editor, the rest being contributed by such other "distinguished writers" (to quote the title-page) as Charles Whitehead (two), Leman Rede, Percival Leigh (two), Cornelius Webbe (two), R. H. Horne (two), E. Chatfield, Leigh Hunt (two), "Alice," Laman Blanchard (two),

Miss Winter, E. Howard, John Ogden (two), William Howitt (two), a "Knight of the Road" Hal. Willis, Samuel Lover, William Thackery (*sic*), Richard Brinsley Peake, Thornton Leigh Hunt, and "Godfrey Grafton, gent." There was some negotiation with a view to Thomas Hood's contributing also, but possibly the fact that he was living at Ostend at the time may have interfered with his so doing.

Under each of the portraits was given a happily found quotation, probably supplied by the editor; that under "The Spoilt Child"—"a child more easily conceived than described"—embodying one of his own conversational sallies. At the close of the volume Kenny Meadows drew a strongly marked "head" of one of the "people" concerned in the production of the work. This was of the editor himself engaged in fastening with his pen a small inky devil upon paper, and occurs appropriately enough at the end of Jerrold's presentation of "The Printer's Devil."¹

A second series and volume of *Heads of the People* by many of the same writers and some others duly made its appearance, and the whole work enjoyed a goodly measure of popularity. In the original or a reprinted form it is not infrequently to be met with in second-hand book lists. Kenny Meadows's very characteristic drawings have now quite an antiquated appearance, but most of the pen

¹ It may be seen among the caricatures opposite p. 236 of this volume.

sketches have as much truth to-day as they had seventy and odd years ago, and are no less true to life now than is much of Jerrold's preface, which may be quoted here as it finds no place with those fourteen "Sketches of the English" which he included in his collected works from the nineteen "Heads" that he had contributed to the original publication. The preface is satirical, sarcastical, but it is a characteristic piece of its author's writing :

"English faces, and records of English character, make up the present volume. Leaving the artist and the writers to exhibit and indicate their own individual purpose, we would fain dwell awhile in the consideration of the general value and utility of a work the aim of which is to preserve the impress of the present age; to record its virtues, its follies, its moral contradictions and its crying wrongs. From such a work, it is obvious that the student of human nature may derive the best of lore; the mere idling reader become at once amused and instructed; whilst even to the social antiquarian, who regards the feelings and habits of men more as a thing of time, a barren matter of *anno domini*, than as the throbbings of the human heart and the index of the national mind, the volume abounds with facts of the greatest and most enduring interest.

"It was no little satisfaction to the projectors of *Heads of the People* to find the public somewhat startled by the first appearance of the work; somewhat astonished at the gravity of its tone, the moral seriousness of its purpose. Many took up the first number only to laugh; and we are proud to say, read on to think. A host of readers were disappointed :

they purchased, as they thought, a piece of pleasantry, to be idly glanced at and then flung aside: they found it otherwise. They believed that they were only called to see and hear the grinning face and vacant nonsense of a glib storyteller, and they discovered in their new acquaintance a depth and delicacy of sympathy, a knowledge of human life, and a wise gladness, a philosophic merriment, and honest sarcasm, that made them take him to their home as a fast friend. Nor was it in England only that the purpose of the work was thus happily acknowledged. It has not only been translated into French, but has formed the model of a national work for the essayists and wits of Paris.¹ The *Heads of the People* of the numerous family of John Bull are to be seen gazing from the windows of French shopkeepers, at our 'natural enemies'—a circumstance not likely to aggravate the antipathy which, according to the profitable creed of bygone statemongers, Nature had, for some mysterious purpose, implanted in the breasts of the Briton and the Gaul!

“The work will be pursued in the same straightforward, uncompromising, and it is hoped, humanizing spirit that characterizes the present volume. John Bull has too long rested in the comfortable self-complacency that he, above all other persons of the earth, enshrines in his own mind all the wisdom and the magnanimity vouchsafed to mortal man; that in his customs he is the most knowing, the least artificial, the most cordial, and the most exemplary of persons; and that in all the decencies of life, he, and he alone, knows and does that which is

“ ‘Wisest, discreetest, virtouousest, best;’

¹ *Les Français Peints par Eux-Mêmes.*

that he has no prejudices—none; or, if indeed he have any, that they exist and have been nurtured so very near his virtues that if *he* cannot detect the slightest difference between them, it is not likely that any vagabond foreigner can make so tremendous a discovery. And then John boasts, and in no monosyllabic phrase, of his great integrity, of his unbending spirit to the merely external advantages of worldly follies: he looks to the man, and not the man's pocket! He—he pays court to no man; no, he cries out in the market-place that honesty is the best policy, grasps his cudgel, looks loftily about him, swelling with the magnificence of the apothegm, and strides away to his beef and ale, with an almost overwhelming sense of all his many virtues.

“Now, let the truth be told. John Bull likes a bit of petty larceny as well as anybody in the world: he likes it, however, with this difference, the iniquity must be made legal. Only solemnize a wrong by an act of parliament, and John Bull will stickle lustily for the abuse; will trade upon it, turn the market penny with it, cocker it, fondle it, love it, say pretty words to it; yea, hug it to his bosom, and cry out ‘rape and robbery’ if sought to be deprived of it.

“Next, John has no slavish regard for wealth: to be sure not; and yet, though his back is as broad as a table, it is as lithe as a cane; and he will pucker his big cheeks into a reverential grin, and stoop and kiss the very hoofs of the golden calf, wherever it shall be set up before him. John will do this and blush not; and having done it, he will straighten himself, wipe his lips with his cuff of broadcloth, look magnanimous, and ‘damn the fellow that regards money.’

“And then for titles. Does John value titles? Hear the contemptuous roar with which, in the

parlour of 'The King's Head' he talks of them. 'What's a title?' he will ask; 'it's the man, eh?' And next week Lord Bubblebrain puts up for the county; and, condescending to ask John Bull for his vote, John stands almost awestruck at his porch, smoothes his hair, smiles, smirks, bows, and feels that there is a sort of white magic in the looks and words of a lord. He stammers out a promise of a plumper, bows his lordship to the gate, and then declares to his neighbours that, 'It warn't for the title he gave his vote—he should hope not; no, he wouldn't sell his country in that way. But Lord Bubblebrain *is* a gentleman, and knows what's right for the people.' And then John's wife remarks, how affable his lordship was to the children, and especially to the sick baby; which John receives as a matter of course; shortly observing, that 'no gentleman could do less; not that he gave his vote for any such doings.'

"And has John no virtues? A thousand! So many, that he can afford to be told of his weakness, his folly—yea, of the wrongs he does, the wrongs he suffers.

"The ridiculous part of John's character is his love of an absurdity, an injustice—it may be, an acute inconvenience—from its very antiquity. 'Why, what's the matter?' we asked last week of an old acquaintance, limping and pushing himself along, not unlike a kangaroo with the rheumatism, 'What's the matter?' 'Matter! corns—corns.' 'And why don't you have 'em cut?' 'Cut!' cried our friend, with a look of surprise and inquiry, 'Cut! why it is now fifteen years that I have had those corns.' There spoke John Bull, though he shall be almost at a standstill, lame with corns, yet what a roaring does he make if you attempt to cut them—and

why? He has had them so many years. A wen upon his neck, if a wen of fifty years' growth, though it bent him double, would 'be to him as a daughter.'"

The John Bull of the early twentieth century is much as was the John Bull of the early nineteenth—if we may judge by the clamour at every fresh essay in political chiropody.

In the autumn of 1839 Jerrold's brother-in-law, Hammond, became lessee of Drury Lane Theatre for three years, and duly opened on October 26. The previous lessee, Alfred Bunn, the "Poet Bunn" of a score of *Punch's* gibes, wrote in his egotistic but entertaining reminiscences :

"The theatre has been let to my successor for £5,000 per annum, and, long before the usual season shall expire, it will be to let for less, or I am a false prophet. The day on which I make this memorandum I met the present lessee of Drury Lane, Mr. Hammond, early in the morning, on my way into the city; and, after the interchange of a few remarks, I said: 'If you don't look much sharper after matters than you do, you'll go where I am going.' 'Where may that be?' said he. 'To the Court of Bankruptcy,' said I. And we parted—he in doubt, and I in certainty. His place is in a *sloop*, not on the quarter-deck of a SEVENTY-FOUR."

If Bunn was a poor poet he proved a true prophet, for Hammond's season came to an abrupt termination on the last day of the following February, having lasted for ninety-nine nights.

One of the early clubs of which Jerrold was a member was The Rationals—a society, chiefly theatrical, that met every Saturday at the Garrick's Head in Bow Street. An occasion there when his fellow members goaded Jerrold into a fury has been described in lively fashion by the dramatist's son-in-law :

“ On one of these Saturday nights, I remember Douglas making his appearance at the Wrekin somewhat earlier, and rather more excited, than usually. There was no necessity to ask the reason : some one had evidently been having a good stir at the little genius's fire, and his steam was up—to a hundred horse-power at least. So he was too full of what had occurred not to be communicative.

“ Now one of the first principles of these same ‘ Rationals,’ as they called themselves, was that fines were to be levied for every offence against the club rules, which had been framed certainly upon the most *irrational* basis. Thus, there were fines for treating the chairman with anything like respect—fines for making a pun—fines for repeating a joke which was a known ‘ Old Joe ’—and fines for telling an anecdote of an earlier date than B.C., or of more than five minutes' duration. Then there were fines for having the ‘ hiccups ’ before supper—fines for murdering the Queen's English, and particularly for *ex-asperating* the h's—fines for calling your brother Rational an ass—and fines for swearing, or indulging in an oath even of the mildest description. Further, fines were imposed on any member stating, when he rose to make a speech, that he was unaccustomed to public speaking—fines for starting a discussion on the immortality of the soul before two

o'clock in the morning—and fines for vowing that you loved your sainted mother, or prided yourself on being a good husband and a father, at any hour of the evening.

“ These fines served to form a fund for the repeated replenishment of the punch-bowl in the course of the entertainment. Consequently every member kept a sharp watch upon the others, and each persisted during dinner in either exciting his brother opposite or next to him to some infraction of the rules, or else in making out that the said brother *had* transgressed them even if he had not; so that, in the heat of the discussion which might ensue, some one might call upon the ‘ holy poker ’ or take his ‘ sacred davy ’ as to the truth of something or other; or appeal to the *worthy* chairman for an *impartial* decision; or else affirm, with withering sarcasm, that it was no wonder the ‘ creature ’ on his right didn’t mind about the pence, and only took care of the pounds, since it behoved all stray animals of *his* class to keep a sharp lookout for the *pounds* certainly—each of which matters being a finable offence, it generally followed that money enough came to be collected in the pool for just a bowl or two as a commencement to the festivities, by the time the cloth was removed.

“ Well, it so happened that, on the night above referred to, the chairman, who, if I recollect rightly, was no less a person than Fitzball (the celebrated slow-music and blue-fire dramatist of the minor theatres), begged of some one near him, who would keep on shouting ‘ Waiter ! ’ at the top of his voice, to have pity on his ears, saying : ‘ Please bear in mind, old boy, *I’ve* got a head on my shoulders,’ whereupon Jerrold cried out across the table—

“ ‘ For my part, Fitz, I think you’ve only got a

blind boil on your shoulders, which will never come to a *head*.'

" 'Fine him,' chuckled the rollicking Paul Bedford, who was the 'vice' of the evening; 'fine Jerrold for saying '*ed*.'

" 'I'll take my oath I didn't!' exclaimed the sensitive little man, stung to the quick at the bare idea that any one could think it possible for him to be guilty of so vulgar an error in his pronunciation.

" 'Fine him again!' roared Tom Grieve, from the bottom of the table, 'for having recourse to an oath.'

" 'Dear me! what long ears *some* creatures have,' sneered Douglas, getting rapidly out of temper.

" 'Fine him, too, for the base insinuation,' once more interposed the roguish Paul.

" 'Fine him! Fine him! Fine him!' was echoed from every part of the table, for all were only too glad to catch the redoubtable little satirist on the hop.

" 'I'll trouble you for eighteenpence, Mr. Jerrold!' said the secretary, blandly walking up to the dramatist with the plate.

" 'I'll see you d—d before I pay a halfpenny,' fumed the author of *Black-Eyed Susan*, now boiling over with passion.

" 'That makes half-a-crown, sir,' added the imperturbable club official, without moving a muscle. 'We charge a shilling a d——, sir; though, I believe you know, we make a liberal allowance on your taking a quantity.'

" This was too much for little Douglas. Fairly beside himself with rage, he knocked the plate from the secretary's hand, and sent all the money which had been previously placed in it by offending members flying into the air.

" Such an incident, of course, threw the convivial meeting into the wildest disorder. Paul Bedford was

up in an instant : he flew with Tom Grieve to the side of the hot-blooded author, and each held him by an arm to prevent him doing any further damage.

“ Now both of these worthies were alike sons of Anak, in their build and stature : men of comparatively herculean frames, and each standing some six feet at least in his shoes.

“ Jerrold, on the other hand, was a mere mite of a man—hardly taller, stouter or stronger than a girl of sixteen ; and yet he was quickened with a spirit which gave him, when roused, the pluck and fury of a stag at bay.

“ So little David struggled and struggled with the Goliath on either side of him ; and having at length burst away from their hold, he threw himself into an attitude of resolute defence, while he growled out between his clenched teeth—

“ ‘ By God, sirs ! if you lay a hand upon me again, I’ll throw the pair of you out of the window.’

“ ‘ Ay ! and I believe I should have done it too,’ added the little fellow on recounting the adventure to me, utterly unconseious as he was of the gross absurdity of his fancying that it was possible for a dwarf like *him* to fling two giants like *them* through the casement.”¹

Another story to which no date is attached may be given here. There was at one time a clever, drunken, dissipated individual connected with the press, who from his habits, and being at any time ready to prostitute his talent for gain, had obtained the unenviable name of “ Dirty Cummings.” An article re-

¹ From a magazine article on *Jerrold’s London*, by Henry Mayhew.

markable for the brilliancy of its wit and the keenness of its satire had appeared anonymously in one of the popular journals and caused something of a sensation. Jerrold and several literary men were in the parlour of a theatrical tavern one evening, when the conversation turned upon this article and the question of its authorship. Cummings at length solemnly rose and said: "Gentlemen, I feel overwhelmed by your flattering eulogy of the article in discussion. A feeling of modesty has hitherto sealed my lips, but I can no longer conceal the truth—*I am the author.*" The company were astounded, and incredulous, till Jerrold, who had remained calm and silent, quietly addressed Cummings, saying: "I regret to be compelled to deprive you, Mr. Cummings, of that portion of fame you have a laudable desire to obtain, and of which you certainly stand in need; however, it happens most unfortunately for your well-known love of truth that I have the draft of the article in question in my pocket"—producing the proof slips—"it is here, with the corrections, singularly enough, marked in my handwriting—*I am the author.*" Poor Cummings, it is added, made an ignominious retreat, amid the scornful laughter of the company.

In the autumn of 1838 it was announced in one of the journals that "Jerrold has a new five-act comedy nearly ready for Macready"; some weeks later: "several new farces and dramas have been accepted at Covent Garden,

from the several pens of Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, Jerrold, Poole, and Egerton Wilks ”; and again :

“The *Advertiser*, a journal now and then particularly *heavy* on the theatres and theatrical matters generally, weekly chronicling the debut in the country of some favourite *Snooks* or *Jenkins*, who may have walked on for the third or fourth robber in a fifth-rate Surrey melodrama, has undertaken this week to relate the progress of a five-act drama now being prepared by Jerrold. After stating that the first four acts have already seen the light, it states that the *delivery* of the fifth may be daily looked for. Here’s news—rare news! only think when the act is brought to completion, of Jerrold being brought to bed. Poor Jerrold! here are materials for a new domestic drama. We trust that this bantling will be soon able to *run* alone and speak for itself. We should be sorry to learn that when, as the author was expecting the critical caudle, he should instead receive from the audience the customary *groaning*. At present we are happy to announce in obstetric phraseology, that he is ‘as well as can be expected.’”

Yet again in the same periodical we read, early in 1839, “the fifth act of Jerrold’s new play was found frozen in a garret last week in the vicinity of Hampstead.” It was no friendly spirit that dictated some of these comments, yet the fact that they were made was in itself a tribute to the position of the dramatist. The strange thing is that the piece thus heralded to an unusual extent by newspaper announcement is the only play of Jerrold’s

that was to remain unacted, and why it so remained is a mystery. From some of the comments pencilled on the copy of the manuscript which I have examined it may be imagined that Macready and the author could not agree as to certain changes in the plot which the actor thought would improve it. The story opens on the very day on which "George Malpas of Malpas Hall in the county of Nottingham" should have wedded the fair Alice, daughter of the blind Everingham who had "lost all his substance in the war" which cost Charles the First his throne and life. The wedding is prevented, for there are unredeemed bonds which put the lawyers in possession of Malpas Hall and send the owner off a wanderer with a promise to return to Alice in three years. A pretty romance is developed in which the man of parchment, Lapwing, and Sir Edwy Somercoate—doubly the rival of Malpas—play their parts before that happy ending is attained to which in the days of optimistic drama an audience confidently looked.

In *The Spendthrift*, Douglas Jerrold once again essayed the use of blank verse in the more serious parts of the dialogue though the play opened with a prose scene in which a complacent innkeeper lauded his house as one of his fellows was later to do in the opening of *Time Works Wonders*.

"*Collop*. Aye, sir, aye; I think that is beef! But my heart, Sir! you should see the thing some people call beef in this town; veal, Sir, veal, crossed in its

growth. But you say well, Sir; that is, indeed, an ox to be proud of. Ha! Sir, that ale's as soft as moonlight. 'Tis true, the town has a name for ale, but there's only one Blue Dog for all that. Ha! ha! Sir, as you say, 'tis like honey in your throat. Last summer, the thunder spoilt the liquor hereabout—the thunder never came near the Blue Dog! I pray you, Sir, don't look to find another fowl like that in these parts; not another, save in the roost at the Blue Dog. A bed of roses hasn't the sweetness of that ham, Sir. Pork cured into a nosegay: but then I smoked it, myself, Sir—not that I ever brag of anything in my poor homestead—but for smoke, Sir——

Church bells are heard to ring.

Lapwing. Eh? bells?

Collop. Aye, Sir; a beautiful silvery peal—but you can hear them nowhere so well as where you sit.

Lapwing. A wedding, eh? Many people marry at Nottingham?

Collop. Why, Sir, we have, I hope, our share of simplicity with the rest of the kingdom.

Lapwing. Ha! a great bridal this?

Collop. Very great; that is, great on one side. He's a good one as ever carried purse.

Lapwing. And the bride—the girl—the wench?

Collop. She's good, too, of a sort: but, master lawyer, when the weight's all in one scale, eh?

Lapwing. Bad—bad! Justice is neither carved nor painted in that way. *Her scales are equal.*

Collop. Why, I take it—for the Blue Dog has been to Sessions—I take it, that's sometimes according to the money you put in 'em."

Beginning thus lightly, the story is shown to be a shadowed one by the arrival of the

dismissed musicians. The shadow is such as to compel the young man to leave the girl on the very day on which she should have been his wife, and a tender story of constancy is developed as those who are responsible for the exile of Malpas seek also to victimise the patient Alice. The play though shot through with comedy is more dramatic than most of its author's comedies of manners, but suffers perhaps a little from the blank verse in which its more serious scenes are presented, for Jerrold, gifted with a keen poetic sense, did not move easily in "the gewgaw fetters of rhyme." It is to be regretted that Macready did not produce the play, for it might well have scored a success.

Among the meeting-places of men of letters, actors and others of the 'thirties and 'forties were the cigar shops and "divans," some of which seem to have been in effect clubs. Of these one of the best known seems to have been Kilpack's Divan in King Street, Covent Garden—premises that later became more famous as Evans' Supper Rooms. In a miscellany journal of 1839, *The Town*, a perfect storehouse of facts reputable and disreputable concerning the social life of the period, I find the following account of this place—then known as "Gliddon's Divan":

"This elegant place of amusement, and intellectual as well as physical refreshment, was established in 1825, by Mr. Arthur Gliddon, whose lady, when he kept a tobacconist's shop in Tavistock Street, was

celebrated in Leigh Hunt's *Indicator* as 'La Bella Tobacoia.' It is a handsomely furnished apartment, about sixty feet long, twenty high and twenty broad. Its present proprietor is Mr. Thomas Kilpack, a dark little man, below rather than above the middle height, with his heart in the right place, becoming civility of manner, an intelligent head, a large family and a chatty amiable disposition. It is well known that his Divan is thriving. Father as it is to all similar places of resort, and anxiously as our little Tommy endeavours to merit the patronage of an enlightened and discriminating public, we should be surprised were it not so. The society one meets with there is difficult of definition. Its variety is, in fact, a great attraction. Artists, authors, actors, attorneys, soldiers, sailors, surgeons, members of Parliament, with a sprinkling of our nobility are daily and nightly to be viewed on the premises. . . . D—s J—d, the man who did *Black-Eyed Susan*, is also a subscriber. He said a devilish good thing by the way, to Orator Clarke, the intellectual weaver of Bedford Street, who made so great a sensation at the Radical meeting in Maiden Lane a week or two back. Clarke, having made some remarks worthy the excellent Tory principles he advocates, looked at J—d for a reply to what he had said. 'Oh, my dear boy,' said the good-natured little scribbler, 'you're a good lantern—but you've got no light inside you.' C—bb,¹ the Tory frame-maker, who was by, roared as he always does, like a bullock."

Jerrold must long have been a *habitué* of Kilpack's. As we saw in one of his letters he earlier made it a place for meeting friends, and

¹ *i. e.* William Crabb, who seconded the nomination of Sir Francis Burdett as candidate for Westminster.

George Augustus Sala must have been writing of the late 'forties when he said : " Often have I sidled into Kilpack's shop to get a twopenny cheroot and catch a furtive glimpse of the author of *Men of Character* and *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, as he sat on a cask of snuff, swinging his legs and dangling his eyeglass, and ever and anon removing his hat to pass the fingers of one hand through his grey mane of hair."

CHAPTER X

BOULOGNE—"THE PRISONER OF WAR"—
"BUBBLES OF THE DAY"

1840—1843

BOULOGNE, it has been said, was a favourite resort of Jerrold's, where he could enjoy the change of life and relief from the distractions of London, which it may well be imagined interfered over much with the work of one so strongly social and clubbable. To a school at Boulogne each of his three boys was sent as soon as he was of sufficient age, and thither Thomas soon followed his brothers William and Edmund, the parents with the two girls, Jane and Polly, occupying a house in the neighbourhood for months at a time.

Although for some while a resident of the now popular French watering-place, Douglas Jerrold was by no means an infrequent visitor to London, occupying when there the house at the extreme southern end of Essex Street, Strand (No. 25), while the Hammonds were in Liverpool, where Hammond was lessee of another theatre, and where his other brother-in-law, William Robert Copeland, was long connected with theatrical management as proprietor of the Theatre Royal and Amphitheatre. The stay in

Boulogne had been fruitful of another comedy, and during January, theatre-goers learned from the daily press that "the *White Milliner*, Jerrold's forthcoming comedy at Covent Garden, is said to be founded on an historical anecdote related by Walpole and quoted by Pennant. In the New Exchange, or England's Bourse, erected in 1608, north of the present Adelphi Terrace, and pulled down in 1735, a female, according to Walpole, suspected to be the widow of the Duke Tyrconnel, supported herself by the trade of this place. She sat in a white mask and a white dress, and was known by the name of the White Milliner. Vestris, of course, acts the Milliner."

That this truly explains the origin of the piece may be gathered from the fact that the item of information was sent by the playwright himself to Moran of "the great *Globe*"—requesting a corner for its insertion.

On February 9, 1841, the play made its appearance, and was well received. The cast included a number of actors and actresses of considerable note in their day, some of whose names have indeed become classical in the Green Room—Charles Mathews, W. Farren, Keeley, Madame Vestris and Mrs. Humby, at least, are names still familiar to all with but the slightest acquaintance with the stage history of the nineteenth century. Charming, indeed, is the dainty comedy, with its striking scenes, its admirable play of witty language, and the scope it allows for pretty and varied

stage effects. The scene is laid in the days of good Queen Anne, and the whole of the interest turns, of course, upon the identity of the mysterious masked milliner.¹

Shortly after the production of *The White Milliner* the play was published in Duncombe's "acting edition," and a copy of this which has come into my hands bears an interesting announcement to the effect that on the following first of March there would be published Volume I of "Jerrold's Plays," containing eight of his comedies and dramas. The issue consisted, it may be imagined, of Duncombe's "acting editions," with special title-pages, bound together in volume form. I have been so far unsuccessful in my effort to light upon a volume of this series of Douglas Jerrold's plays; the earlier series published by Miller has also proved unobtainable, though I have a few odd plays from each.

Once more, in 1841, the early summer saw the Jerrold family deserting the dingy house overlooking the unembanked Thames for the bright and pleasant surroundings of a cottage near Boulogne. This was the house which the famous actress, Dorothy Jordan, had occupied after her unhappy flight from England, before she passed on to Paris and a lonely death. Here Jerrold stayed, devoting his mornings to the desk and his afternoons to

¹ This play was acted twice in the spring of 1885 by an amateur company at the Criterion Theatre.

rambles and excursions with his young family and the friends who came over to visit him, then he removed to a house in the Rue d'Alger, Capecure—on the south side of Boulogne, and there he was visited by George Hodder, who describes a happy fortnight spent in August as his guest.

“A dip in the sea—his native element as he sometimes called it—was a relaxation to which he was especially addicted, but he did not care to indulge it where the multitude was wont to assemble for the same object. On one occasion I was walking with him at sunset along the beach, in the outskirts of the town, when the tide was unusually low, and the sands were as smooth and unruffled as a drawing-room carpet. The charm of the weather seemed to absorb Jerrold's attention, for the evening was as calm and placid as the countenance of a sleeping infant, and he made frequent allusions to the atmosphere, which, he said, was such as he had never experienced 'out of France.' At length, fixing his eye upon the almost motionless sea, and inhaling the fresh air as if he were sipping nectar, he suddenly exclaimed, 'How lovely the water looks! Egad, I'll have a dip!' and in scarcely more time than is occupied by the pantomime clown in making his inevitable 'change' he stuck his stick in the sand, placed his hat upon the top and his clothes around it, and ran into the water with a nimbleness which he could hardly have surpassed in the midshipman days of his youth.”

The same visitor, too, gives a pleasant picture of what he terms “the domiciliary

habits of Jerrold," of his delight in juvenile parties when his children and their school companions found him one of the readiest to join in any fun, and when he always included in the evening's amusement acting charades, in which the principal performers were himself, Alfred Wigan and his wife, and M. Bonnefoy, the master under whom the Jerrold boys were being educated.

By early rising and devoting his mornings to the desk, Douglas Jerrold got through a goodly amount of work while giving his visitors the impression that he was always at their service, so one of those visitors said. During this summer he was writing two comedies, one for Drury Lane and one for Covent Garden—both of them to be hailed as literary successes and one of them as a considerable stage success.

This year is a notable one in Jerrold's career, for while he was in Boulogne a group of his friends in London were bringing to fruition an idea which seems to have been "in the air" for a little time. I am not going to re-open the vexed question of the origin of *Punch*; and I need not enter at all fully into the story of Jerrold's association with the paper, for I have already dealt with that story at some length in a previous volume.¹ Suffice it that the projectors of *Punch* found their scheme take definite shape in the summer of 1841, that Jerrold was evidently early ac-

¹ *Douglas Jerrold and "Punch,"* Macmillan, 1910.

quainted with the fact, and invited to send in contributions, and that his first contribution only arrived in time for insertion in the second number. One of the early political articles which he signed "Q"—the subject a Bishop's consecrating of regimental colours—"made so great a sensation that the Society of Friends had it reprinted and placarded it on the walls of Nottingham." Henceforward *Punch* and the *Punch* circle were to form an important part of his life, but to his special association with them it will only be necessary here to make occasional reference.

It was at about this time that Jerrold was instrumental with other devoted Shakespeareans in starting the Shakespeare Society—Frederick Guest Tomlins is credited with being the actual founder—becoming a member of the first Council, with Payne Collier, J. O. Halliwell (afterwards Halliwell-Phillips), Charles Knight, Sir Frederick Madden and Talfourd among his colleagues. The Society may perhaps be regarded as a development of the more social if less scholarly Mulberry Club. The movement for forming the Society seems to have begun in 1839, and to have been successfully carried to a conclusion in the following year or 1841, after which its publications formed for some years important contributions to Shakespearean literature.

During this winter the two plays which had occupied the author during his sojourn at Boulogne were in active preparation at the

two patent houses, and were to be recognized as notable additions to the best work which he had done for the stage.

Some time before *The Prisoner of War* was produced it was read by the author to two friends in the Essex Street house one Sunday afternoon. Those friends were Henry Mayhew and Frederick Guest Tomlins, and the former has left a pleasant account of the experience in which he says that "Jerrold read the play as he *could* read, if he liked; giving the finest point to all his wit, the most glowing fire to all his passion and the most exquisite tenderness to all the gentle and more touching portions of the piece. That evening I have long kept mapped out in my mind as one of 'the greenest spots in memory's waste.' Tomlins and I sat by the open windows puffing our clouds and sipping our 'toddy' while little Douglas tested the effect of his latest mental experiment upon our two brains—as Molière was wont to try his comedies on his cook." This reading, if Mayhew's memory was correct, must have taken place during the summer of 1841, as he speaks of the scent of roses from the Temple Gardens coming in at the window. It was on February 8, 1842, that *The Prisoner of War*, a comedy in three acts, was produced at Drury Lane, and achieved a distinct success, as the author had confidently anticipated. As it was said, the parts of the self-satisfied Englishman, Pallmall, and of his lively sister Polly, would have sufficed to estab-

lish a less interesting play—and those parts were enacted by Robert Keeley and his wife in a way which suggested that they might have been, as they doubtless were, “fitted with them.”

When the peace of Amiens was broken within a year of its being made, and the British minister left Paris, Napoleon retaliated by detaining all the British subjects who were in France at the time, and it is with a body of such *détenus* kept at Verdun that the play is concerned. It is a delightful comedy both in the pleasant sentimental story it unfolds and in its picture of the good people of Verdun seeking, like thrifty folks, to make all they can out of the “enemy” compulsorily detained in their midst. In the opening scene some of the French are discovered discussing the prisoners, when Pallmall enters just as Nicole has said: “A plague on these English dogs, say I! They’ve spoilt Verdun.”

“*Pallmall*. Politeness, Monsieur Nicole, politeness to the captive. If we are dogs, can’t you skin us, and be civil?”

Babette. Oh, Monsieur Pallmall, never mind Nicole. Doesn’t all Verdun love the dear prisoners, the charming English?

Boaz. Aren’t all our houses open to you?

Pallmall. All. In Ireland the pig pays the rent; in Verdun the pig’s an Englishman. Oh, only to see how your housekeepers squabble for a lodger! Such hospitality! I was never so fought for by the women in my life.

Boaz. And isn't our pockets open to you, isn't my pocket open ?

Pallmall. Open as a rat-trap; but I shan't nibble, Boaz. No, you don't toast cheese for me. As for the innocent sailors—the poor saltwater babes that you swallow like oysters by the dozen——

Boaz. Vot vould dey do without me? Ven deir allowance is gone, vy den——

Pallmall. Gone! It never comes; you pounce upon it by the way; like an old hawk on a carrier pigeon.

Boaz. Dey vill drink—dey vill gamble—poor tings—only to lose de time.

Pallmall. And you'll be gambled with for tempting 'em, brave, unsuspecting fellows! You'll be one of the devil's dice, depend on't.

Boaz. Mr. Pallmall! Devil's dice!

Pallmall. Listen. He'll find two rascally money-lenders—if he can—with as many spots upon them as yourself; and, on a night of chickenhazard, he'll rattle you all three together in a red-hot dice-box. That's your fate.

Boaz. Ha! Mister Mallpall! vot I do ish kindness. I have no profits—de taxes eat up all.

Babette. Yes, indeed—since the war the taxes are dreadful.

Pallmall. All comes of living in France—should live in England.

Babette. What, have you never a tax in England!

Pallmall. We haven't the word in our language. There are two or three little duties, to be sure; but then, with us, duties are pleasures. As for taxes, you'd make an Englishman stare only to mention such things.

Boaz. Indeed? Ha, ha, charming place. Den vidout taxes how do you keep up de government?

Pallmall. Keep it up? Like an hourglass: when one side's quite run out, we turn up the other and go on."

When two of the French housekeepers are squabbling over a new prisoner, the successful one claims him, declaring that Lieutenant Firebrace had promised her, and "though I struggled, would kiss me, as he said to bind the bargain." Firebrace admits it: "I kissed and promised. Such beautiful lips! Man's usual fate, I was lost upon the coral reefs." Pallmall is reproached by his sister for having been so boastful as to be sent from Paris, and he says it was nothing but patriotism.

"*Polly.* Patriotism? Would you think it, sir, he quarrelled with some French dragoons, because he would insist that the best cocoanuts grew on Primrose Hill, and that birds of paradise flew about St. James's.

Pallmall. And wasn't that patriotism? They abused the British climate, and I championed my nation, sir. As a sailor isn't it your duty to die for your country?

Firebrace. Most certainly.

Pallmall. As a civilian, sir, 'tis mine to lie for her. Courage isn't confined to fighting. No, no, whenever a Frenchman throws me down a lie—for the honour of England I always trump it.

Polly. Yes, brother; but, recollect, how very often you play the first card.

Pallmall. And if I do colour up England a little for these Frenchmen, after all, 'tis but a little; just a touch here and a touch there.

Firebrace. Take a sailor's advice, sir; don't colour

at all. Where nature has done so well, there's little need of paint or patches.

Polly. What a sentiment! Why couldn't I think of it when Ma'amselle La Nymphe wanted me to wear rouge?"

Well written and well acted, *The Prisoner of War* was immediately successful. It is recorded in the life of Samuel Phelps that on the first production of the play "the author went behind the scenes to congratulate Samuel Phelps on his success with the part of the chess-playing Captain Channel, and in the course of the talk said slyly: 'I suppose, old fellow, you have not forgotten my prophecy of the five-and-twenty shillings, eh!—you're getting almost as many pounds, I expect!' The actor answered with a long-drawn 'No—not quite that.' As a matter of fact he was getting twenty." Jerrold did not mind having to admit that his prophecy of about twenty years earlier had been falsified. A curious instance of the contradiction of authorities is to be found in this small matter, for Phelps's biographers doubtless got that story from the veteran actor himself. Yet George Hodder said of *The Prisoner of War*, "It is not a little singular that, proud as Jerrold was and had reason to be of this admirable work, he never saw it played—at least during its first season."

Before *The Prisoner of War* had been three weeks acted, the second of the pieces the writing of which had occupied Jerrold in Boulogne during the previous year was ready,

and on February 25 the curtain went up at Covent Garden Theatre on a five-act comedy entitled *Bubbles of the Day*—"one of the wittiest and best-constructed comedies in the English language"; "the most electric and witty play in the English language, a play without story, scenery or character, but which by mere power of dialogue, by flash, swirl and coruscation of fancy, charmed one of the most intellectual audiences ever gathered." A play, as another critic (and an actor), put it, which has wit enough for three comedies. *Bubbles of the Day* was a distinct literary success, but not a stage one; it did not enter upon such a "run" as *The Prisoner of War* was enjoying at the other theatre over the way. It was, indeed, five acts of witty talk with but the thinnest thread of story, and it is said that those who most admired the dialogue were readiest to recognize the lack of plot and of sustained interest in the action. Thus it was that though the author found the play one which added to his fame as a man of letters he had the disappointment of finding that it did not establish itself as a "draw."

There appears to have been about this time again some of that falling out of faithful friends which is said to be the renewing of love between Jerrold and his chum of many years, Blanchard, for a portion of a letter of April 5, 1842, from the latter to the former evidently marks a meeting following on a period of estrangement. Blanchard wrote:

“ MY DEAREST FRIEND,— . . . My soul acquits me of having done any wrong to the sacred feeling that holds us together; but I must convince you of this guiltlessness by something more impressive than a few words, and I will. There has never been any real reason for the cessation of intercourse between us, any more than for the cessation of the imperishable soul of friendship that makes us one; and intercourse only lessened and dropped on my side because there were jarrings when we met in company, and a constraint when we were alone. And I could easier bear our non-meeting than appear to trifle with what was most solemn or affect an indifference which (whatever may be the case with any such passion as envy, hatred or jealousy) is, and ever must be, impossible. I could not go on meeting you as I might any one else, with an uneasy conscience under the easy manner, and the anticipation of reproaches, to which all reply must come in the form of recrimination.

But I am now doing what I said was unnecessary. Trust me, I rejoice most deeply, unfeignedly and with my whole heart, in our meeting on Saturday, and I shall date as from a new day. More you cannot be to me than you have been for twenty years; but as the miser who puts his gold out to use is richer than he who locks the same up in his strong-box, so I, having the same friend as of old, shall be richer by turning that invaluable, that inexpressible blessing to its true account. God bless you and yours always,
prays

“ Your most affectionate friend,

“ LAMAN BLANCHARD.”

The following fragment of a letter from Blanchard appears to belong to the same period :

“God send you more successful days, for, apart from other considerations, there is something in success that is necessary to the softening and sweetening of the best-disposed natures; and nothing but that, I do believe, will so quickly convince you of the needless asperity of many of your opinions, and of the pain done to the world when you tell it you despise it.”

This suggests that Jerrold had been expressing himself with emphatic bitterness on something at the time, and also illustrates the diverse temperaments of the two men, the one a tender, dreamy poet, the other a lively, eager critic of life, wrathful over all wrong and injustice, keen on expressing himself, and impatient that things were not to be more rapidly bettered.

In April 1842, Douglas Jerrold returned once more to Boulogne, taking with him to join his daughters at school there, one of his Hammond nieces. He settled himself at 4, Rue d'Alger, for he wrote thence, on May 9, to one Henry Phillips:

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have only to-day received your letter. I am here, I think, for the season. It is, however, not improbable that I may visit London for a few days in June. However, can the matter you write of be discussed in a letter; if so, direct as above, and I will lose no time in replying to you.

“Yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

From Boulogne Jerrold continued the political articles signed “Q” which he was

writing for *Punch*, and set once more to work on the writing of a comedy for Covent Garden, undeterred by the qualified success which had attended the brilliant *Bubbles*. Though his children were all at school, by his living at Boulogne they were sufficiently near for him to have them frequently with him, and for him to pass many pleasant hours with them and friends from England, in excursions into the neighbouring country. The three boys were still with M. Bonnefoy, and the two girls—as I learn from a sampler worked by the younger one, then ten years of age, in this year of 1842—were “*élevés des Dames Fevrier*” who had a school in the Rue Tant-Perd-Tant-Paie at Boulogne. It was during this stay that a simple incident happened to which, it was said, he would often refer in later years. His youngest child, Thomas, had a pet rabbit, and one morning the boy entered his father’s bedroom, holding the animal up by its legs, and shouting, “Here he is, papa, as dead as mutton!” The animal dropped heavily on the ground, and Tom, his feigned indifference overcome by the sound, burst into tears, saying, “I knew it had the snuffles when I bought it!” As the eldest son simply recorded, “This bit of nature was never forgotten by ‘stern’ Douglas Jerrold.”

Friends crossed over on brief visits, and some were tempted who for one reason or another could not accept, as we gather from a letter of May 26, 1842, received from Laman Blanchard :

“MY DEAR JERROLD,—My wife was witness to a vow, now three weeks old, that I couldn’t and wouldn’t reply to your note until she had made up her mind, yea or nay, upon the proposal it contained; but as, with a consistency marvellous in women, she continues to the close of the month in the same way of speech, saying, ‘Ah, it’s all very nice talking!’ and ‘It’s easy for you,’ and ‘Nothing I should like so much, *but*——’ and ‘Suppose Edmund were to get down to the ditch,’ and ‘What do you think? *that* Miss Mary had the porkbutcher down in the kitchen last night’—and five thousand other objections rung upon such changes as the house on fire, the necessary new bonnetings, the inevitable sea-sickness, and the perils of the ocean—to say nothing of a reserved force brought up when all other objections are routed in the shape of a presentiment that *something* will happen—God knows what, but something—directly her back is turned upon old England (what *can* she mean?)—all this, I say, induces me to break my vow, and communicate the indecision and perplexity that beset us daily. I had forgotten, however, the most solid of the difficulties that stand between us and you—the others are, indeed, but spongy, and might easily be squeezed dry; but here is a bit of rock ahead in the “warning” of a servant in whom we have trust. She is going away—away to be married, as most of our maids do. This is about the sixth in four years. Better, you will say, than going away not married, but really in the present case a bore, especially if the other (as is probable) follows her. We should be left with two strangers, and my wife’s natural dread, almost a superstitious one, of leaving home—of losing sight of her children—of crossing the water more especially—would be increased to an unsoothable height. At present, however, it is

only certain that *one* goes, and so we must wait the issue of another fortnight, and then abandon finally all the exquisite pleasure of procrastination—and *decide*. Never surely did God sanctify the earth with lovelier weather than now. Even Lambeth is a heaven below in such a blessed time as this. But still there is a whisper going on in the paradise all about me to ‘be off,’ telling me that no opportunity can be fairer, and that no welcome can be half so strong. But to Boulogne without *her* would never do, the hope having been so fondly raised; so if you see one you see both. At the worst, as she says, it is something to have been so warmly wished for; and to have such a letter backing the verbal wish. For myself I am urgently moved toward Gloucester, where I have an acquaintance (‘which is very well hoff’) relying on an old promise; but it must be older yet ere it be fulfilled. And Hastings also calls upon me, from the sea, saying, ‘You said you’d come in May’; but Hastings is as impotent as Gloucester. Belfast, moreover, pleads winningly, and still in vain. This to let you know I am cared for in other quarters, and that I prize your summons before all others, however pleasant and friendly. . . . I send you a little song written since I saw you, and rather relished I find. I have about half a volume of such matters scattered here and there.

TRUTH AND RUMOUR

As Truth once paused on her pilgrim way
To rest by a hedge-side thorny and sere,
Few travellers there she charmed to stay,
Though hers were the tidings that all should hear
She whispering sung, and her deep rich voice
Yet richer, deeper, each moment grew;
And still though it bade the crowd rejoice,
Her strain but a scanty audience drew.

But Rumour close by, as she pluck'd a reed
From a babbling brook detain'd the throng;
With a hundred tongues that never agreed,
She gave to the winds a mocking song.
The crowd with delight its echoes caught,
And closer around her yet they drew;
So wondrous and wild the lore she taught,
They listen'd, entranced, the long day through.

The sun went down : when he rose again,
And sleep had becalm'd each listener's mind,
The voice of Rumour had rung in vain,
No echo had left a charm behind.
But Truth's pure note, ever whispering clear,
Wand'ring in air, fresh sweetness caught;
Then all unnoticed it touch'd the ear,
And fill'd with music the cells of thought.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ LAMAN BLANCHARD.”

Early this year Douglas Jerrold brought together a number of the short stories and philosophical and allusive papers that he had contributed to periodicals during the previous half-dozen years and published them as *Cakes and Ale*, and the two volumes with frontispieces and pictorial title-pages by George Cruikshank were issued by Messrs. How and Parsons, who also published the *Bubbles of the Day* in a handsome form. The volumes were dedicated : “ To Thomas Hood, Esq., whose various genius touches alike the spring of laughter and the source of tears, these volumes are in the fullest sincerity dedicated.” In acknowledgment Hood, then nearing the close of his brave life, wrote :

“DEAR JERROLD,—Many thanks for your *Cakes and Ale*, and for the last especially, as I am forbidden to take it in a potable shape. Even Bass’s, which might be a Bass relief, is denied to me. The more kind of you to be my friend and pitcher.

“The inscription was an unexpected and really a great pleasure; for I attach a peculiar value to the regard and good opinion of literary men. The truth is, I love authorship, as Lord Byron loved England—‘with all its faults,’ and in spite of its calamities. I am proud of my profession, and very much inclined to ‘stand by my order.’ It was this feeling, and no undue estimate of the value of my own fugitive works, that induced me to engage in the copyright question. Moreover, I have always denied that authors were an irritable genus, except that their tempers have peculiar trials, and the exhibitions are public instead of private. Neither do I allow the especial hatred, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness so generally ascribed to us; and here comes your inscription in proof of my opinion. For my own part, I only regret that fortune has not favoured me as I could have wished, to enable me to see more of my literary brethren around my table. Nevertheless, as you are not altogether Home’s Douglas, I hope you will some day find your way here. Allow me to thank you also for the *Bubbles*, and to congratulate you on your double success on the stage, being, I trust, pay and play—not the turf alternative. I am, dear Jerrold,

“Yours very truly,

“THOS. HOOD.”

From Boulogne on June 13 Jerrold wrote—evidently to Benjamin Webster—a lively letter on his dramatic work:

“ 4, Rue d'Alger, Boulogne, s/n.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—It is with great pleasure I acknowledge your letter. I forget his name, but I believe there *is* in the Kalendar a saint who was once an actor (and, I hope, also a manager). I will endeavour to discover him; and as this is a Catholic country, I will offer up to him a whole sixpenny bottle of ink, in expiation of my unjust suspicion of Farren. If the saint is not to be found, I suppose I must *fast* upon salmon for the next fortnight. Perhaps, however, the best way will be to dedicate a few pounds of candles—midnight tapers, by the light of which shall be written for him a magnificent part.

“ I am, however, engaged upon a drama for you—if Mr. Osbaldistone will spare me the phrase—‘ of a peculiar and startling character.’ I think the very thing for the Haymarket; one of those things that either flash in the pan or hit like a bomb-shell. I also have two other subjects for your next season; for I think my manufacture—such as it is—will show best at Haymarket distance. I have always thought so, and shall be glad when I have induced your opinion to back mine. Had *Bubbles* first been shown by your footlights, I think they would have glittered for a season (to be sure, I never chanced the refusal).

“ This brings me to a point in your letter. I do not like to be thought unduly impressed with the value of my own wares, rating them above the merchandise of others: but look at the difference of *London Assurance* and my play; I mean the different circumstances that attended them. The *Assurance* author gets—there was *no* Miss Kemble—a long, uninterrupted run, and consequently *all* the money he dipped his pen for, *Bubbles* are only

suffered to glisten between the shakes of a prima donna (and *very great* shakes they were, I must own), is brought out as a forlorn hope at the fag-end of a season; and the author, with his tobacco-pipe and soap-dish, is on the eighteenth night—*only* the eighteenth, my masters—of his blowing, compelled to make way for what? why—the German Flute! How stands the present account?

<i>Assurance</i> . . .	£400
<i>Bubbles</i> . . .	270
	<hr/>
Due on <i>Bubbles</i> . . .	£130

Only let me make up the balance, and then—the frog *shall* come out of the marble—the world *shall* see what liberality dwells in the heart of a playwrighter.

“ Yours ever truly,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“ I will write to you more about the play in a few days, giving you the plot and purpose of same. Does Mme. Celeste act at Haymarket again *this* season?”

There was to be no Haymarket play for nearly three years, but the piece for Covent Garden was completed this summer, and was duly produced by Madame Vestris at that theatre on September 10. The play was *Gertrude's Cherries, or Waterloo in 1835*, a two-act comedy, and for its production Jerrold visited London—the proposed trip in June did not apparently take place. A pleasant, romantic story is unfolded in the play; for Gertrude, the vendor of cherries near the historic battlefield, is daughter of an English-

man believed to have died at Waterloo, and who, having quarrelled with his family, has allowed them to continue in that belief. That man's father has come to visit the field of tragic memories, bringing with him his grandson Vincent and the youthful widow whom he wishes that grandson to marry. The youthful widow falls in with an early flame, Vincent promptly falls in love with the damsel of the cherries—only later to find that she is his cousin, and Gertrude's father and grandfather are of course reconciled. It is a pretty play with some entertaining dialogue, in which a honeymooning undertaker from Houndsditch, who is greatly befooled by sellers of "relics" of the great battle, plays the chief comic part.

"Jerrold, after witnessing the success of *Gertrude's Cherries*, has, we believe, returned to France"—so ran a newspaper comment of the day, but it was not to prove a happy return, for shortly afterwards—after a chilly evening spent on the pier at Boulogne—he had a severe attack of rheumatism which settled in the eyes and made him suffer tortures. As his son put it, "a French doctor came to him, and treated him as a horse might be treated. He was blistered, and again blistered. He shrieked if the light of the smallest candle reached him; yet he could, if the chord were touched, say a sharp thing. This French doctor had just been operating upon the patient. The patient had winced a little,

and the operator had said, 'Tut! tut! it's nothing at all!' Presently some hot water was brought in. The doctor put his fingers in it, and sharply withdrew them with an oath. The patient, who was now lying, faint, upon the sofa, said 'Tut! tut! It's nothing—nothing at all!'"

After five weeks of illness he was well enough to pay a visit to London for the purpose of consulting a specialist, and on November 7 wrote from Dover:

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—You will, I know, be happy to see this scrawl. I have just crossed from Boulogne and shall be in London to-morrow evening. I, in truth, rejoice in a resurrection. I, however, come to have advice from Alexander that will, I trust, in a few days quite restore me. I will see you (thank God! I *now* can see you) in the forenoon of Wednesday.

"Yours truly ever,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD."

The letter is written in a large and "scrawling" manner quite in contrast with the author's usual small, neat penmanship, and thus bears its evidence to the affliction from which the writer had suffered. It was evidently but a brief visit to London, for just three weeks later Jerrold wrote again to the same correspondent from Boulogne, announcing his determination to settle in London:

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—In dread of a relapse, I have resolved to avail myself of the first fair day—for

here the weather continues very bad—and start for England. I have tried for several mornings to work, but cannot. After half-an-hour's application, or less, reading or writing, thick spots obscure my sight, and then come all sorts of horrid apprehensions. Yet I strive to think it is nothing but weakness, which rest—and rest only—will remedy. On this, however, I come (and have resolved to settle in England) for advice. I now despair being able to complete *Rabelais*, for, though I might still eke out sight enough for it, without any permanent evil—yet the nervous irritability which besets me weakens every mental faculty. You will, I hope, believe me truly distressed at the inconvenience I shall draw upon you, which, at no small risk, I would if possible prevent. If, however, I am to work again, *Rabelais* shall be the first thing I complete. I shall see you in a few days.

“ Yours ever most truly (and sadly),

“ D. JERROLD.”

John Forster was at the time editor of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, and Jerrold had promised a contribution on the subject of *Rabelais*—a contribution which he was destined never to write, though he is said to have been a diligent and enthusiastic student of *Rabelais*' work. Writing to Douglas Jerrold's son many years later, Forster said, “ I never in my experience found an understanding of, and liking for, *Rabelais* other than the sure test of a well-read man. Your father had read and studied a great deal more than those who most intimately knew him would always have been prepared to give him credit for.” The tone

of the preceding letter was coloured not only by his own severe illness but by the fact that a niece, the one whom he had himself taken out in April—daughter of his sister, Mrs. Hammond—to be at school with his own girls in Boulogne, had just died there.

During 1842—week by week from the beginning of July until the end of the year, Jerrold had been contributing to the columns of *Punch* a satirically pointed series of *Punch's Letters to His Son*, which were duly published early in the following year as a neat little volume with a number of illustrations by the author's old friend, Kenny Meadows. Jerrold was already feeling, perhaps somewhat bitterly, the reputation which had been passed on him for bitterness, and he wrote as *Punch* in the introduction to these letters: "I am prepared to be much abused for these epistles. They are written in lemon-juice. Nay, the little sacs in the jaws of the rattlesnake, wherein the reptile elaborates its poison to strike with sudden death the beautiful and harmless guinea-pigs and coneys of the earth—these venomous bags have supplied the quill that traced the mortal sentences. Or if it be not really so, it is no matter; the worthy, amiable souls, who would have even a Sawney Bean painted upon a rose-leaf, will say as much; so let me for once be beforehand, and say it for them." The writer was again and again to be accused of dipping his pen in lemon-juice merely because he refused to subscribe to the

smugly comfortable but pernicious doctrine that "all's right with the world."

Reaching London with his family towards the close of 1842, Douglas Jerrold settled for a short time in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, while looking about for a new home, and thence on January 1, 1843, he wrote to Forster :

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—A happy new year to you ! I have at last a tranquil moment, which I employ in jotting a few words to you. I should have called upon you when I came to see Alexander but was summoned back to Boulogne, where I found my dear niece—a loveable, affectionate creature, little less to me than a daughter—in her coffin at my house. She had died of typhus at school—died in her fourteenth year. I found my wife almost frantic with what she felt to be a terrible responsibility ; for we had brought the child only last April from her heart-broken mother to Boulogne. I assure you, that I have been so harassed by bodily and mental annoyance, I might say torture—that I have scarcely any notion of how the time has passed since I last saw you. We are, however, now settling down into something like tranquillity. I am myself much better—with the healthful use of my sight. I have taken a house near Regent's Park (Park Village) and hope to be in it in a few days, with all my family. I will call upon you in a day or two. The contents of the *Foreign* have a promising appearance—I deeply regret that one article is wanting.

" Ever, my dear Forster, yours truly,

" DOUGLAS JERROLD.

" Possibly we may meet at Talfourd's on Thursday."

The article "wanting" in the *Foreign Quarterly* was, of course, his own promised paper on Rabelais.

The house that was fixed upon was a very pretty place, 3, Gothic Cottages, Park Village East, Regent's Park, and there at the beginning of 1843 the home was newly set up, and in "a study bowered by trees" the author could set to work again so far as his still but convalescent eyes would permit. He had already begun the tender *Story of a Feather*, which commenced its serial appearance in the pages of *Punch* in the first number for the new year, and in the tree-bowered study it was to be continued and completed. That the eyes were still causing some anxiety is to be gathered from the next letter to Forster :

" 3, Gothic Cottages, Regent's Park,
" February 15 [1843].

" MY DEAR FORSTER,—I am kept at home for one or two days, with a *hint* (no more) of inflammation in one of my eyes : this will pass by keeping out of the cold air. I have been at work and shall be quite ready for you. I will see you, I hope, on Friday. I am, indeed, sorry to hear of your ill-health—and most heartily wish you speedy deliverance from the fiend rheumatism. Have you tried 'Feaver's Embrocation' ? It is, I know, a quack medicine ; but as the regulars are puzzled by the malady past all knowledge, one is, therefore, justified in trying the amateurs. I have found instant relief from it—'tis an outward 'appliance'—and have successfully recommended it in several cases—notwithstanding my belief that every man has his *own* rheumatism.

I heard on Saturday morning that you *had* been ill, and also at night from Blanchard that you were quite recovered, or should have called on Monday.

“ Yours ever truly,

“ D. JERROLD.

“ I'm glad you like the *Feather*.”

He was evidently still contemplating the Rabelais, but as evidently had not got beyond the contemplation of it when he wrote again some three weeks later :

“ MY DEAR FORSTER,—I have been from home, and so received yours only last night. I have found it impossible to do any work by candlelight, which hindrance has considerably impeded me : and I have moreover lost time in finally settling certain matters which have been long harassing me—however, *now* they are settled I should have communicated with you ere this, but day by day thought the annoyance would be over, and so leave my mind at liberty. I cannot accomplish the paper in time—and yet have scarcely the courage to tell you so. I have, however, been the victim of circumstances which may in your opinion make me seem reckless and negligent in this affair—*but it is not so*. You have doubtless seen my name in conjunction with a new periodical. Do not believe that that project has employed my thoughts to the neglect of you—for nothing more has been done than the writing of the advertisement.

“ Yours truly,

“ D. JERROLD.”

On April 4, Douglas Jerrold made one of his infrequent appearances in public, when as

steward he supported Charles Dickens, who was presiding at the London Tavern over the annual dinner of the Printers' Pension Society. One of the toasts ran, "Thomas Hood, Esq., Douglas Jerrold, Esq., and the other authors present," and to this Hood responded.

At length, after the various delays, Jerrold gave up any idea of doing the Rabelais article and wrote on April 19 :

"MY DEAR FORSTER,—If ever I propose to myself the evil habit of not attending to letters, *you* I can assure you will be about the last I shall pass the unseemly practice upon. I have delayed answering until now, because I wished to answer definitively. I feel that in two instances my non-performance must have been so grievously inconvenient and perplexing, that I would not *risk* a *third* for any consideration. It is, therefore, that I have taken time to answer. I *think* I could do the paper; but I will not content myself with supposition. This magazine, placing as it does a new responsibility upon me, will not allow me to answer definitively *yes*; and, therefore, rather than run the least hazard, rather than chance the remotest doubt—with great, very great, unwillingness, I reply—*no*. It is, however, but the poorest justice to you that I should say as much; as I perfectly appreciate the motive which has—out of consideration to me—kept so good a subject for the work hitherto untouched. Though, however, I may not be able to give the time and labour necessary to so elaborate a [matter] as Rabelais, I should nevertheless much like any other subject that might present itself in an easier vein. I will,

if you like, keep my attention awake to some such subject, and post to you thereupon.

“ Yours truly,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

Some days later the volume which was evidently to have been the “ peg ” on which the article was to be hung was returned to the disappointed editor :

“ MY DEAR FORSTER,—I send *Rabelais*. You will perceive a change in the book, inasmuch as the scarlet edges are a *faint* reflection of the blushes of

“ Yours truly,

“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

In May came the first number of the *Illuminated Magazine* — apparently Douglas Jerrold’s first essay in editing since the *Punch in London* of a dozen years before. The “ advertisement ” of the *Illuminated* declared that “ figures and objects of every kind there will be, illustrative of the text, in its every variety of essay—narrative—history—of social right and wrong—of the tragedy of real life, as of its folly, its whim, its mere burlesque. Our prime object will be variety of matter, so that the readers of the *Illuminated Magazine*, like the lovers of pine-apples, may choose some for one flavour, some for another, and some—and we trust the greater number—for all.” In the preface to the first volume completed in the following October, it was said :

“It has been the wish of the proprietors of this work to speak to the *MASSES* of the people; and whilst sympathizing with their deeper and sterner wants, to offer to them those graces of art and literature which have too long been held the exclusive right of those of happier fortunes.”

The magazine set off with an essay by the editor entitled “Elizabeth and Victoria,”¹ in which the author compared the legendary “good old times” with the degenerate present of the grumbling *laudator temporis acti*. It is this essay that is referred to in the following letter from Charles Dickens. The “books” may be taken to indicate a belated presentation copy of *Cakes and Ale*:

“Devonshire Terrace,
“Third May, 1843.

“MY DEAR JERROLD,—Let me thank you most cordially for your books (and I have read them with perfect delight), but also for this hearty and most welcome mark of your recollection of the friendship we have established; in which light I know I may regard and prize them.

“I am greatly pleased with your opening paper in the *Illuminated*. It is very wise and capital; written with the finest end of that iron pen of yours; witty, much needed, and full of truth. I vow to God that I think the parrots of society are more intolerable and mischievous than its birds of prey. If ever I destroy myself, it will be in the bitterness of hearing those infernal and damnably good old times extolled. Once, in a fit of madness, after having been to a public

¹ Reprinted with *The Chronicles of Clovernook*, 1846.

dinner which took place just as this Ministry came in, I wrote the parody I send you enclosed, for Fonblanque. There is nothing in it but wrath; but that's wholesome, so I send it you.

“ I am writing a little history of England for my boy, which I will send you when it is printed for him, though your boys are too old to profit by it. It is curious that I have tried to impress upon him (writing, I dare say, at the same moment with you) the exact spirit of your paper, for I don't know what I should do if he were to get hold of any Conservative or High Church notions; and the best way of guarding against any such horrible result is, I take it, to wring the parrots' necks in his very cradle.

“ O Heaven, if you could have been with me at a hospital dinner last Monday! There were men there who made such speeches and expressed such sentiments as any moderately intelligent dustman would have blushed through his cindery bloom to have thought of. Sleek, slobbering, bow-paunched, over-fed, apoplectic, snorting cattle, and the auditory leaping up in their delight! I never saw such an illustration of the power of the purse, or felt so degraded and debased by its contemplation, since I have had eyes and ears. The absurdity of the thing was too horrible to laugh at. It was perfectly overwhelming. But if I could have partaken it with anybody who would have felt it as you would have done, it would have had quite another aspect; or would at least, like a 'classic mask' (oh, d—— that word!) have had one funny side to relieve its dismal features.

“ Supposing fifty families were to emigrate into the wilds of North America—yours, mine and forty-eight others—picked for their concurrence of opinion on all important subjects and for their resolution

to found a colony of commonsense, how soon would that devil, Cant, present itself among them in one shape or other? The day they landed, do you say, or the day after?

“That is a great mistake (almost the only one I know) in the *Arabian Nights*, when the Princess restores people to their original beauty by sprinkling them with the golden water. It is quite clear that she must have made monsters of them, by such a christening as that.

“My dear Jerrold, faithfully your Friend,

“CHARLES DICKENS.”

CHAPTER XI

ILLNESS—LETTERS FROM CHARLES DICKENS—
THE FIRST SHILLING MAGAZINE

1843—1844

THAT there was something disappointing to the editor about the appearance of the *Illuminated* we learn from one or two references in his letters of the time. And indeed the colour implied in the title was limited to the title-page, and was very crudely produced. That despite such mechanical drawbacks the magazine met with a cordial reception we learn from the following note addressed to Cyrus Redding :

“ 3, Gothic Cottages,
“ May 12 [1843].

“ MY DEAR REDDING,—I have been out of town for two or three days, or should have answered before. Name your own day, giving me a forty-eight hours' notice and you shall command the 'tediousness' of,

“ Yours truly,
“ DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“ The mag. *was* infamously printed. It has, however, done more than well. In June 'twill, I think, be brighter.”

With the magazine safely started, and meeting with such a reception as promised for it a goodly future, the editor was able to take his work with him away to some such country retreat as always delighted him. The experience of the previous autumn had probably made Boulogne a place of memories too sadly fresh in the mind, and Jerrold went for the first time to a place which attracted him again and again in successive years—though a place, it may be said, which he did not mind chaffing in the pages of *Punch*. This was Herne Bay—or rather the village of Herne, lying something less than a couple of miles from the actual Bay, where for several years at holiday time he sought rustic quiet. Firwood House, the only place in the neighbourhood with which I can definitely associate his visits to the breezy and bracing Kentish coast, is at Herne Common, a delightful tree-embowered hilltop house, from the pines at the back of which is to be seen the Bay. From Herne, about the end of May 1843, he wrote thus to Charles Dickens—what the enclosure for Daniel Maclise was does not appear :

“MY DEAR DICKENS,—I write from a little cabin, built up of ivy and woodbine, and almost within sound of the sea. Here I have brought my wife and daughter, and have already the assurance that country air and sounds and sights will soon recover them.

“I have little more than a nodding acquaintance with Maclise, and therefore send the enclosed to him



FIRWOOD HOUSE, HERNE BAY

(From a water-colour sketch by Mr. Hugh Thomson, R.I., in the possession of the Author)

through you. I cut it out of *The Times* last summer in France, with the intention of forwarding it. Since then it has been mislaid, and has only turned up to-day with other papers. It appears to me to contain an admirable subject for a picture; and for whom so specially as Maclise? What an annoyance, too, it is to know that good subjects, like the hidden hoards of the buried, are lying about, if we only knew where to light upon them. This, to be sure, is only annoying to those who want subjects or money; and then, again, of these Maclise is not. Nevertheless upon the fine worldly principle of leaving £10 legacies to Cræsus, I send the enclosed to Mr. M. I am about to take advantage of the leisure of country life, and the inspiration of a glorious garden, to finish a comedy begun last summer, and to which rheumatism wrote 'to be continued,' when rheumatism, like a despotic editor, should think fit. By the way, did they forward to you this month's *Illuminated Magazine*? I desired them to do so. As for 'illuminations,' you have, of course, seen the dying lamps on a royal birthday-night, with the R burned down to a P, and the W's very dingy W's indeed, even for the time of the morning. The 'illuminations' in my magazine were very like these. No enthusiastic lamplighter was ever more deceived by cotton wicks and train oil, than I by the printer. However, I hope in another month we shall be able to burn *gas*."

The "illumination" in so far as that was shown in the red, blue and gold title-page of the magazine was certainly not satisfactory, but in the second meaning of its title the miscellany may be said to have justified that title thoroughly. The stay in Herne Bay provided

the editor with material for some light yet pregnant philosophical essays—now it is a sight of the local workhouse, with its two tiny windows looking out in the country—all its other windows turned inward upon the small enclosed space and looking but upon other buildings. “No crevice, no loophole permitted captive poverty a look, a glimpse of the fresh face of nature; his soul, like his body, was bricked up according to the statute.” A consideration of this leads to the conclusion: “If God punish man for crime, as man punishes man for poverty, woe to the sons of Adam.” In another case it is a walk to the twin towers of *Reculver* that starts a vein of musing. Then, it may be added, this striking coast-mark had not been safeguarded from the devouring sea. No longer is it possible to see the bones of the long-dead exposed in the wave-washed earth of the burial ground around the remains of the ancient church; no longer can one have the experience which Douglas Jerrold recorded at the close of his *Gossip at Reculver* :

“One day, wandering near this open space, we met a boy, carrying away, with exulting looks, a skull in very perfect preservation. He was a London boy, and looked rich indeed with his treasure.

“‘What have you there?’ we asked.

“‘A man’s head—a skull,’ was the answer.

“‘And what can you possibly do with a skull?’

“‘Take it to London.’

“‘And when you have it in London, what then will you do with it?’

“ ‘ I know.’

“ ‘ No doubt. But what will you do with it?’

“ And to this thrice-repeated question, the boy three times answered, ‘ I know.’

“ ‘ Come, here’s sixpence. Now, what will you do with it?’

“ The boy took the coin—grinned—hugged himself, hugging the skull the closer, and said very briskly, ‘ Make a money-box of it!’

“ A strange thought for a child. And yet, mused we as we strolled along, how many of us, with nature beneficent and smiling on all sides—how many of us think of nothing so much as hoarding sixpences—yea, hoarding them even in the very jaws of Death!”

While Jerrold was at Herne Bay came news that Benjamin Webster had, for the encouraging of English dramatic talent, offered the sum of five hundred pounds for the best comedy submitted to him by the close of the following September. The author of over sixty plays was highly diverted by the manager’s proposal; he had won a place as the first of living dramatists by nearly a quarter of a century’s writing for the stage—and for his most successful piece, a piece that had established an unchallenged “record,” to use a modern phrase, he had received from the theatre but a tenth of that amount. He wrote to Charles Dickens :

“ Of course you have flung *Chuzzlewit* to the winds, and are hard at work upon a comedy. Somebody—I forget his name—told me you were seen at the Haymarket door, with a wet newspaper in your hand,

knocking frantically for Webster. Five hundred pounds for the *best* English comedy! As I think of the sum, I look loftily around this apartment of full twelve by thirteen—glance with poetic frenzy on a lark's turf that does duty for a lawn—take a vigorous inspiration of the double 'Bromptons' that are nodding defyingly at me through the diamond panes—and think the cottage, land, pigsty, all are mine, evoked from an ink-bottle, and labelled 'freehold,' by the call of Webster! The only thing I am puzzled for is a name for the property—a name that shall embalm the cause of its purchase. On due reflection I don't think *Humbug Hall* a bad one.

"If a man wanted further temptation to write the 'best' comedy, it would be found in the composition of the court that shall decide upon its merits. Among the judges shall be authors and actors, male and female, with dramatic critics. I am already favoured with the names of some of these, which, as you *will* persist, you may be interested in the knowledge of. . . . Mind, you must send in your play by Michaelmas—it is thought Michaelmas Day itself will be selected by many of the competitors; for, as there will be about five hundred (at least) comedies, and as the committee cannot read above two at a sitting, how—unless, indeed, they raffle for choice—can they select the true thing—the phoenix from the geese—by January 1, 1844? You *must* make haste, so don't go out o' nights. . . ."

To this Charles Dickens replied in "merry pin" as follows:

*Devonshire Terrace,
Thirteenth June, 1843.*

"MY DEAR JERROLD,—Yes, you have anticipated my occupation. *Chuzzlewit* be d—d. High comedy

and five hundred pounds are the only matters I can think of. I call it *The One Thing Needful: or A Part is Better than the Whole*. Here are the characters—

<i>Old Febrile</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Farren
<i>Young Febrile (his Son)</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Howe
<i>Jack Hessians (his Friend)</i>	. . . . .	Mr. W. Lacy
<i>Chalks (a Landlord)</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Gough
<i>Hon. Harry Staggers</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Mellon
<i>Sir Thomas Tip</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Buckstone
<i>Swig</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Webster
<i>The Duke of Leeds</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Coutts
<i>Sir Smivin Growler</i>	. . . . .	Mr. Macready

Servants, Gamblers, Visitors, etc.

<i>Mrs. Febrile</i>	. . . . .	Mrs. Gallot
<i>Lady Tip</i>	. . . . .	Mrs. Humby
<i>Mrs. Sour</i>	. . . . .	Mrs. W. Clifford
<i>Fanny</i>	. . . . .	Miss A. Smith

“One scene, where Old Febrile tickles Lady Tip in the ribs, and afterwards dances out with his hat behind him, his stick before and his eye on the pit, I expect will bring the house down. There is also another point, where Old Febrile, at the conclusion of his disclosure to Swig, rises and says: ‘And now, Swig, tell me, have you ever acted ill?’ which will carry off the piece.

“Herne Bay. Hum. I suppose it is no worse than any other place in this weather, but it is watery rather, isn’t it? In my mind’s eye, I have the sea in a perpetual state of smallpox; and the chalk running downhill like town milk. But I know the comfort of getting to work in a fresh place, and proposing pious projects to one’s self, and having the

more substantial advantage of going to bed early and getting up ditto, and walking about alone. I should like to deprive you of the last-named happiness, and to take a good long stroll, terminating in a public-house, and whatever they chanced to have in it. But fine days are over, I think. The horrible misery of London in this weather, with not even a fire to make it cheerful, is hideous.

“ But I have my comedy to fly to. My only comfort ! I walk up and down the street at the back of the theatre every night, and peep in at the green room window, thinking of the time when ‘ Dick—ins ’ will be called for by excited hundreds, and won’t come until Mr. Webster (half Swig and half himself) shall enter from his dressing-room, and quelling the tempest with a smile, beseech the wizard, if he be in the house (here he looks up at my box), to accept the congratulations of the audience, and indulge them with a sight of the man who has got five hundred pounds in money, and it’s impossible to say how much in laurel. Then I shall come forward, and bow once—twice—thrice—roars of approbation—Brayvo — brarvo — hooray — hoorar—hooroar—one cheer more ; and asking Webster home to supper, shall declare eternal friendship for that public-spirited individual,

“ I am always, my dear Jerrold,

“ Faithfully your Friend,

“ The Congreve of the Nineteenth Century

“ (which I mean to be called in the
Sunday papers)

“ P.S.—I shall dedicate it to Webster, beginning : ‘ My dear Sir,—When you first proposed to stimulate the slumbering dramatic talent of England, I assure you I had not the least idea—etc., etc., etc.’ ”

Webster's offer of a prize for the best English comedy led to some member or members of the *Punch* staff indulging in a pleasant piece of parody in the manner of the *Rejected Addresses*, and during the following winter was published a shilling brochure from the *Punch* office, entitled "*Scenes from the Rejected Comedies*, by some of the competitors for the Prize of £500 offered by Mr. B. Webster, Lessee of the Haymarket Theatre for the Best Original Comedy, Illustrative of English Manners." The second "Scene," purported to be from "*Humbugs of the Hour*, by D—s J—d," and is a neat scrap of parody, stressing some of the characteristics of Jerrold's dramatic writing, and especially the smartness of repartee used by all his people—"but perhaps it is a piece of ungrateful hypercriticism to complain of a dramatist for putting wit into the mouths of all his characters."

To Jerrold this summer came sad news of the death of an old friend of the Mulberry Club days. William Elton, an actor of some note in his day, was among the fifty-two persons drowned in the wrecking of the *Pegasus* off the Farne Islands on July 19, 1843, and Jerrold, Dickens and many other friends joined in raising a fund for his family. In an early number of the *Illuminated Magazine* Douglas Jerrold inserted two of Elton's "Mulberry Leaves," prefacing them with the following tribute to his friend and reminiscence of the Club:

“ These poems were written, sung and said by the late Edward William Elton, whose awful death has quickened public sympathy towards the children of the departed—the orphans of a fond, shipwrecked father. The lines were among the contributions of a society—the Mulberry Club—formed many years since, drawn into a circle by the name of Shakespeare. Of that society William Elton was an honoured and honouring member. Noble men had already dropped from that circle. The frank, cordial-hearted William Godwin, with an unfolding genius worthy of his name, was smitten by the cholera. Edward Chatfield, on the threshold of a painter’s fame, withered slowly into death. And now William Elton, with his children left to the mercies of the world—and well has the world vindicated its sympathies for his hapless best beloved—has been called to his old companions.

“ The society in which the subjoined poems were produced is now dissolved. In its early strength it numbered some who, whatever may have been or yet may be, their success in life, cannot but look back to that society of kindred thoughts and sympathizing hopes, without a sweetened memory—without the touches of an old affection. My early boy-friend, Laman Blanchard, and Kenny Meadows, a dear friend, too, whose names have become musical in the world’s ear, were of that society; of the knot of wise and jocund men, then unknown, but gaily struggling.

“ I have given a place in these pages to the following poems not, it will be believed, in a huckstering spirit to call morbid curiosity to the verses of a drowned actor, but as illustrative of the graceful intelligence of the mind of one, for whose fate the world has shown so just a sympathy. Poor Elton! He was

one of the men whose walk through life is nearly always in the shade. Few and flickering were the beams upon his path! The accident that led to the closing of his life was only of the same sad colour as his life itself. He was to have embarked in a vessel bound direct for London. She had sailed only half-an-hour before, and he stepped aboard that death ship, the *Pegasus*! If, however, the worldly successes of Elton were not equal to his deserts, he had a refined taste, and a true love of literature—qualities that ‘make a sunshine in a shady place,’ diminishing the gloom of fortune. As an actor, Elton had not sufficient physical power to give force and dignity to his just conceptions. In his private character—and I write from a long knowledge of the dead—he was a man of warm affections and high principle; taking the buffets of life with a resignation, a philosophy, that to the outdoor world showed nothing of the fireside wounds bleeding within.”

Elton was but forty-nine when he died, journeying homewards to his young family of seven children, after fulfilling a month’s engagement at the Edinburgh Theatre. He was tragically unfortunate in his home life, in that having been separated from his first wife, his second wife went out of her mind after bearing five children. Poor Elton! indeed.

It was at Herne Bay that Douglas Jerrold set to work on that dainty imaginative piece of philosophical fiction—containing according to some critics some of the finest prose-writing of his time—the *Chronicles of Clovernook*,

Much of this beautiful story—which began in the magazine for August of this year, was written at a time when the author was again racked by his old enemy rheumatism; again that enemy attacked his eyes, and his slight frame was so tortured by the disease that—a man in the early prime of his life, but just over forty, he is said to have had to be carried on an arm-chair on board the boat which was to take him back to London. This was presumably in October, for to the short instalment of the story in the November number was appended the following note :

“ Here a sudden and sharp illness compelled the writer to lay down his pen; nor was he able to resume it until too late in the month to continue the narrative. When Louis XIV visited the death-bed of one of his favourites, the moribund courtier begged pardon for the ‘ ugly faces ’ which the acuteness of his suffering wrought in him. In the like spirit of contrition, a periodical writer feels that he ought to beg pardon of the sovereign public *for being ill*, when he is expected to be in the enjoyment of working health, still ‘ to be continued ’ with the monthly task he has entered upon.”

The old conditions of “ to be continued ” when authors wrote from month to month as their copy was required did not allow of a man’s falling ill—if he were so unfortunate as to do so there was an awkward break in the serial publication of his work. And Douglas Jerrold was at this time writing two serials, turning from the weekly instalments of the

Story of a Feather for *Punch* to the *Clovernook* for the *Illuminated*. He had a bad bout of it this winter. From the middle of October until December the former story, nearing its close, had to be suspended, and then the last three instalments were written, while after November the readers of the magazine had to wait until March for the continuation of the *Hermit of Bellyfulle's* account of his stay in the land of Turveytop. The editor's illness is touched upon in the following note to Henry F. Chorley, sending a proof of a poem in memory of Victor Hugo's daughter, Leopoldine, who, with her husband—they had been married but a few months—had been drowned in the Seine :

“3, Gothic Cottages, Park Village (East),
“Regent's Park, November 15 [1843].

“DEAR SIR,—I herewith forward you the proof of your touching and beautiful verse; which, believe me, I receive in the full spirit of cordiality with which it is offered. I have been ill—very ill—for some time, or should have acknowledged your kindness before.

“Yours faithfully,
“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

Again and again this winter was the author driven from his desk by illness which made him in appearance a far older man than he was in years, but even from his sickbed and from a darkened room he dictated some of his short, sharp bits for the pages of *Punch*, and, convalescent again, turned to his un-

finished tasks with fresh zeal. In the number for July 1844, the *Chronicles* were somewhat abruptly terminated, and with the October number—the completion of the third volume—Douglas Jerrold ceased to edit the magazine, having, as we shall see, a new and more ambitious project of a similar kind in view. The *Illuminated Magazine* was a capital miscellany, but the editor was perhaps a little too kindly in the acceptance of contributions somewhat over heavy in manner—it is a recurring story in the record of his editorial experiences. Thackeray nearly twenty years later was to expatiate upon the “thorns” in the cushion on which the editor of a popular magazine sat, and Jerrold felt them too. Neither was sufficiently pachydermatous for the position.

A note written by Richard Hengist Horne to Edgar Allan Poe in April 1844 indicates that the *Illuminated* was not then flourishing as it should. Poe's tale, it may be mentioned, did not appear in the magazine.

“ . . . I could most probably obtain the insertion of the Article ¹ you have sent in Jerrold's *Illuminated Magazine*. Jerrold has always spoken and written very handsomely about me, and there would be no difficulty. But—I fear this magazine is not doing at all well. I tell you this *in confidence*. They have a large but inadequate circulation. The remuneration would be scarce worth having—ten guineas a sheet is poor pay for such a page! And now, perhaps they

¹ A tale entitled “The Spectacles.”

do not even give that. I will see. My impression, however, is that for the reasons stated previously, I shall not at *present* be able to assist you in the way I could best wish."

Richard Hengist Horne had in the previous year published his remarkable epic, *Orion*, and published it at the price of one farthing! As Jerrold said in a three-page review of it in the magazine, the author had "certainly taken the most efficient means for enabling everybody to obtain it." Though published at that absurd price—probably in no small measure because of that fact—*Orion* received some share of that attention which it indubitably deserved, and during the same year reached its sixth edition at the greatly enhanced price of half-a-crown. At this time Horne was engaged in preparing a series of studies of contemporary writers somewhat on the lines of Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age*. Douglas Jerrold, who had found in Hazlitt's work inspiration for a dramatic squib, was himself to be considered as one of the authors through whom was expressed the *New Spirit of the Age*.

It has been stated that Douglas Jerrold at times regretted that it had not when young been his lot to be called to the bar, but it must be recognized that he was scarcely fitted for the life of a barrister, and his constant gibes at the law and lawyers do not suggest that he would have found the work congenial. It was, however, possibly when called upon to

make speeches in public that he regretted not having had such work as should have made him get over the painful nervousness that always attended him on the occasions when he had felt compelled to do so. Such a call came to him from Dickens, who had promised to take the chair at a dinner at the London Tavern on June 5, 1844, for the benefit of "the Sanatorium, or the sick house for students, governesses, clerks, young artists and so forth." "Is your modesty a confirmed habit, or could you prevail upon yourself, if you are moderately well, to let me call you up for a word or two at the Sanatorium Dinner? There are some men (excellent men) connected with that institution who would take the very strongest interest in your doing so; and *do* advise me, one of these odd days, that if I can do it well and unaffectedly, I may."

Early in 1844 *The Story of a Feather*, having completed its course in the pages of *Punch*, was published in volume form—the first of Douglas Jerrold's novels and one of an unconventional character. In following the fortunes of an ostrich feather as told by itself from its arrival in this country, the author was enabled to tell a tender story, to delineate some strongly marked characters, and to indulge in that humorous and satiric comment on society in which lay much of his strength as a writer of fiction. He could rarely divorce his pen from a purpose over and above that of mere entertainment, and this perhaps

is one reason why stories acclaimed on their original appearance have ceased to draw with readers who have become impatient with "purpose" rendered in imaginative work. It is a tender, dainty, at times serious and satiric story revealed in the autobiography of an ostrich feather, that is now worn by Kitty Clive, now lying in a sordid Bloomsbury attic. It is not necessary here to recapitulate that story, but the author's long connection with the theatre lends an interest to his summing up of the actor in one of the theatrical chapters :

"An actor is a creature of conceit. Such is the reproof flung upon poor buskin. How, indeed, is it possible that he should escape the sweet malady? You take a man of average clay; you breathe in him a divine afflatus; you fill him with the words of a poet, a wit, a humorist; he is, even when he knows it not, raised, sublimated by the foreign nature within him. Garrick enters as Macbeth. What a storm of shouts—what odoriferous breath in 'bravos' seething and melting the actor's heart! Is it possible that this man, so fondled, so shouted to, so dandled by the world, can at bed-time take off the *whole* of Macbeth with his stockings? He is always something more than David Garrick, householder in the Adelphi. He continually carries about him pieces of greatness not his own; his moral self is encased in a harlequin's jaeket—the patches of Parnassus. The being of the actor is multiplied, it is cast for a time in a hundred different moulds; hence, what a puzzle and a difficulty for David to pick David, and nothing more than David, from the

many runnings ! And then, an actor by his position takes his draughts of glory so hot and so spiced—(see, there are hundreds of hands holding to him smoking goblets !)—that he must, much of his time, live in a sweet intoxication which, forsooth, hard-thinking people call conceit.”

In the introduction the satire of the story is quaintly stressed in a defence of the ostrich against the legends concerning it :

“ For thousands of years my ancestors have borne the weight of lies upon their backs. And first, for the shameless scandal that the family of ostriches wanted the love which even with the wasp makes big its parental heart towards its little ones.

“ ‘ The ostrich, having laid her eggs, leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the sun.’

“ Such is the wickedness that for tens of centuries has passed among men for truth, reducing the ostrich to a level with those hollow-hearted children of Adam who leave their little ones to the mercies of the world, to the dandling of chance, to the hard rearing of the poorhouse. There is Lord de Bowelless ; he has a rent-roll of thousands ; he is a plumed and jewelled peer. Look at him in his robes ; behold ‘ law-maker ’ written on the broad tablet of his comprehensive brow. He is in the House of Peers : the born protector of his fellowmen. How the consciousness of high function sublimates his nature ! He looks, and speaks, and lays his hand upon his breast, the invincible champion of all human suffering—all human truth. Turn a moment from the peer, and look at yonder biped. There is an old age of cunning cut and lined in the face of a mere youth. He has counted some nineteen summers, yet is his

soul wrinkled with deceit. And wherefore? Poor wretch! His very birth brought upon her who bore him abuse and infamy: his first wail was to his mother's ear the world's audible reproach. He was shuffled off into the world, a thing anyway to be forgotten, lost, got rid of. In his very babyhood, he was no more to men than the young lizard that crawls upon a bank, and owes its nurture to the bounty of the elements. And so this hapless piece of human offal—this human ostrich deserted in its very shell—was hatched by wrong and accident into a thief, and there he stands, charged with the infamy of picking pockets. The world taught him nothing wise or virtuous, and now, most properly, will the world scourge him for his ignorance.

“And thus, because man, and man alone, can with icy heart neglect his little ones—can leave them in the world's sandy desert to crawl into life as best they may—because a de Bowelless can suffer his natural baby to be swaddled in a workhouse, to eat the pap of pauper laws—to learn as it grows nothing but the readiest means of satisfying its physical instincts—because his Lordship can let his own boy sneak, and wind, and filch through life, ending life the father did him the deep wrong to bestow upon him, in deepest ignominy, because, forsooth, the human sire is capable of all this, he must, in the consciousness of his own depraved nature, libel the parental feelings of the affectionate ostrich! Oh, that the slander could perish and for ever! Oh, that I could pierce the lie to the heart; with a feather pierce it, though cased in the armour of forty centuries!

“Again, the ostrich is libelled for his gluttony. Believe what is said of him, and you would not trust him even in the royal stables, lest he should devour the very shoes from the feet of the horses. Why, the

ostrich ought to be taken as the one emblem of temperance. He lives and flourishes in the desert; his choicest food a bitter, spiky shrub, with a few stones—for how rarely can he find iron, how few the white days in which the poor ostrich can, in Arabia Petræa, have the luxury of a tenpenny nail?—to season, as with salt, his vegetable diet. And yet common councilman Prawns, with face purple as the purple grape, will call the ostrich—glutton!”

It was during 1843 that the system which gave Drury Lane and Covent Garden a strange monopoly in matters theatrical was at last repealed, a reform of which, as will have been gathered, Douglas Jerrold was an emphatic advocate.

Mention has been made of Richard Hengist Horne's studies of contemporary writers entitled *The New Spirit of the Age*. It is known that Horne received in the preparation of this work much helpful criticism from Elizabeth Barrett—three years later to marry Robert Browning—and therefore in this place there is an interest in the following passage of a letter which she wrote to the author while the work was passing through the press. Horne was a warm admirer of Jerrold and his writings, while Miss Barrett's admiration, it would seem, was considerably qualified. When Wordsworth died it may be said that Jerrold expressed the view that if the Poet Laureateship was not to lapse, it would be fitting that the position should be given by the Queen to a woman, seeing that her reign was distinguished

by so notable a poet as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

“With many thanks I return the proof. It is excellent indeed; and there is a passage about Douglas Jerrold which is full of beauty. You will see marked at the beginning, where I differ from you on the subject of the employment of wit in *satire*, which department of poetry you certainly seem to overlook. All the great satirists have been ‘on virtue’s side,’ or on what they took for virtues; and if they sometimes struck the lash out recklessly, it is no argument against their having generally an intention. . . . Yes, the essay in this proof is excellent. Still it does strike me that you raise Douglas Jerrold a little above his natural level, and depreciate Fonblanque and Sydney Smith a little below theirs, by classing the three together—him, with them, I mean.”

In no spirit of undue partiality it may be said that to-day it would be but a small minority of readers who would, without looking up some work of reference, know anything at all of Albany de Fonblanque, who, brilliant as he was as a journalist, was doomed to the fugacity of fame that is the lot of those who deal, however brilliantly, with criticism of matters of the moment.

During the early part of 1844 Jerrold was very busy with miscellaneous contributions to *Punch*, and with completing the *Chronicles of Clovernook* in the magazine he was editing, on the completion of which, in the July number, he at once set about a new series for *Punch*.

Encouraged by the success which had attended the earlier letters in which the jester had given his advice to his son, the author now started and continued to the end of the year a series presenting *Punch's Complete Letter Writer*.

A letter to Benjamin Webster, of the Haymarket Theatre, this year, refers to the dramatist's *Time Works Wonders*.

“ *Boulogne-sur-Mer,*
“ *September 19 [1844], Rue de Maquetra.*”

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I have only to-day received your letter with one from Lemon. From this I am induced to believe that what I urged in my last respecting the additional remuneration has come as an unexpected demand upon you, and I therefore, under the present circumstances, waive it : the more especially, as from certain matters I have now in hand, I should not be able to complete the two-act piece for your present season. I am moreover of opinion that the piece I sent you will be susceptible of fuller effect (as, indeed, must all pieces of sentiment and character) on your stage than [that] of any larger arena. Will you favour me with an *early* line, addressed as above.

“ Yours truly,
“ D. JERROLD.

“ If Maywood cannot be made to dovetail with your arrangements, I am willing that the part should go to Mr. Strickland.”

Some time during the autumn of this year Douglas Jerrold paid a visit to Scotland, and was present at a Burns Festival at which the poet's sons were entertained, but unfortunately

no particulars of the trip are available beyond the two pages on the theme which he contributed to *Punch*.

In the October number of the *Illuminated Magazine* Jerrold bade farewell to his readers in a brief note dated from "West Lodge, Putney Common," and resigning his office to his successor—who (perhaps after an interval) was William John Linton, the poet and engraver whose wife, Mrs. Lynn Linton, was to be one of the most popular writers of the next generation. The following letter—the first available that was written from the home most memorably connected with its writer—addressed to Camilla Toulmin (afterwards Mrs. Newton Crosland) suggests that the editorship had not been an entirely comfortable position and hints at a new venture that was evidently then taking shape :

" West Lodge, Putney,
" October 10, 1844.

" MY DEAR MADAM,—I am happy to learn that you have returned recruited for your work, which I have no doubt will bear evidence of the fresh air of Devon. My engagement with the magazine ended somewhat abruptly, but I am on perfectly good terms with the proprietor who, for a mere money-grubber, is by no means the worst of that stolid class. I feel, however, sensibly relieved by withdrawing from the work; it kept me from higher and better labour, and I was constantly trammelled by indecision and ignorance. Mr. Ingram's partner *thinks* himself literary, and will I believe edit. If I can judge correctly of his taste, it will not long survive his intelligence. He has a notion that contributions are to be got for

nothing, and so they are, and when got are worth exactly what is paid for them.

I have the satisfaction of knowing that from what has been done much good has resulted to Thom, but almost all assistance has been from the south. Scotland has kept her purse-strings with a double knot in 'em, even though it seemed that half-farthings have been expressly issued to tempt her liberality. I will send you Thom's book when I can pick it out of the little mountain of volumes amongst which it is at present buried.

"I shall certainly bestow my tediousness upon you the first time I come your way, and my paternal duties¹ will, I presume, make the day not distant. We trust, also, that yourself and mamma will see us here in the great desert of Putney, in which I never breathed more freely than for months past. Now I have here the blessing of a large garden, out of which I hope to dig a book or two.

"In two or three months I hope for the pleasure of again meeting you on a work under a far different proprietorship than that I have just quitted. With our remembrances to Mrs. Toulmin, believe me,

"Yours truly,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD.

"P.S.—I trust I need not say that at any time it will afford me much pleasure—in so far as 'what so poor a man as Hamlet can do'—to forward your wishes; and therefore hope you will never hesitate to tell me when you think I can be in the slightest way useful."

To a short-lived periodical of this autumn, *The Stage*, Jerrold contributed some brief

¹ Presumably to visit his elder daughter, Jane, who during this year (1844) married Henry Mayhew.

articles, one on *The Poor Player*, evidently informed with recollections of his father's life as a "stroller," and the other—inspired by the writer's own experiences—on *Refusing a Part*. At about this time it was announced, too, that "a new drama by Douglas Jerrold will be speedily produced at the Strand Theatre," but the announcement was not true. It may have been a misreading of the revival of *Nell Gwynne* at that theatre. Not yet was the dramatist to make a return to the stage. He was, indeed, engaged in negotiating for the production of a more ambitious magazine venture than the *Illuminated*, and that early in November the arrangements were completed may be gathered from the following note of November 11 to George Hodder, who was a reporter on the *Morning Herald*, and then engaged on his *Sketches of Life and Character Taken at Bow Street*:

"DEAR HODDER,—I arrived back last night. My object in now writing is that you should speak to Mr. H. (I forget his name), the surgeon of Sanatorium, telling him that I have a magazine coming out on January 1 (the thing is decided), and that I shall be very glad if he will furnish an article of the same nature as his last. The matter must be of the *present day*, and social in its application,

"Yours truly,

"D. J."

Charles Dickens was away in Italy completing a new Christmas story, *The Chimes*, and thence he wrote inviting Jerrold to the

reading of that story and asking him to return afterwards to Italy :

“ *Cremona,*
“ *Saturday Night, Sixteenth November, 1844.*

“ MY DEAR JERROLD,—As half a loaf is better than no bread, so I hope that half a sheet of paper may be better than none at all, coming from one who is anxious to live in your memory and friendship. I should have redeemed the pledge I gave you in this regard long since, but occupation at one time, and absence from pen and ink at another, have prevented me.

“ Forster has told you, or will tell you, that I very much wish you to hear my little Christmas book; and I hope you will meet me, at his bidding, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. I have tried to strike a blow upon that part of the brass countenance of wicked Cant, where such a compliment is sorely needed at this time, and I trust that the result of my training is at least the exhibition of a strong desire to make it a stagerer. If *you* should think at the end of the four rounds (there are no more) that the said Cant, in the language of *Bell’s Life*, ‘ comes up piping,’ I shall be very much the better for it.

“ I am now on my way to Milan; and from thence (after a day or two’s rest) I mean to come to England by the grandest Alpine pass that the snow may leave open. You know this place as famous of yore for fiddles. I don’t see any here now. But there is a whole street of coppersmiths not far from this inn, and they throb so d—ably and fitfully, that I thought I had a palpitation of the heart after dinner just now, and seldom was more relieved than when I found the noise to be none of mine.

“ I was rather shocked yesterday (I am not strong

in geographical details) to find that Romeo was only banished twenty-five miles. That is the distance between Mantua and Verona. The latter is a quaint old place, with great houses in it that are now solitary and shut up—exactly the place it ought to be. The former has a great many apothecaries in it at this moment, who could play that part to the life. For of all the stagnant ponds I ever beheld, it is the greenest and the weediest. I went to see the old palace of the Capulets, which is still distinguished by their cognizance (a hat carved in stone on the courtyard wall). It is a miserable inn. The court was full of crazy coaches, carts, geese and pigs, and was ankle-deep in mud and dung. The garden is walled off and built out. There was nothing to connect it with its old inhabitants and a very unsentimental lady at the kitchen door. The Montagues used to live some two or three miles off in the country. It does not appear quite clear whether they ever inhabited Verona itself. But there is a village bearing their name to this day, and traditions of the quarrels between the two families are still as nearly alive as anything can be in such a drowsy neighbourhood.

“It was very hearty and good of you, Jerrold, to make that affectionate mention of the *Carol* in *Punch*, and I assure you it was not lost on the distant object of your manly regard, but touched him as you wished and meant it should. I wish we had not lost so much time in improving our personal knowledge of each other. But I have so steadily read you, and so selfishly gratified myself in always expressing the admiration with which your gallant truths inspired me, that I must not call it time lost, either.

“You rather entertained a notion, once, of coming

to see me at Genoa. I shall return straight, on the ninth of December, limiting my stay in town to the week. Now couldn't you come back with me? The journey, that way, is very cheap, costing little more than twelve pounds; and I am sure the gratification to you would be high. I am lodged in quite a wonderful place, and would put you in a painted room, as big as a church and much more comfortable. There are pens and ink upon the premises; orange trees, gardens, battledores and shuttlecocks, rousing wood-fires for evenings, and a welcome worth having.

“Come! Letter from a gentleman in Italy to Bradbury & Evans in London. Letter from a gentleman in a country gone to sleep to a gentleman in a country that would go to sleep too, and never wake again, if some people had their way. You can work in Genoa. The house is used to it. It is exactly a week's post. Have that portmanteau looked to, and when we meet, say, ‘I am coming.’

“I have never in my life been so struck by any place as by Venice. It is *the* wonder of the world. Dreamy, beautiful, inconsistent, impossible, wicked, shadowy, d—able old place. I entered it by night, and the sensation of that night and the bright morning that followed is a part of me for the rest of my existence. And, oh, God! the cells below the water, underneath the Bridge of Sighs; the nook where the monk came at midnight to confess the political offender; the bench where he was strangled; the deadly little vault in which they tied him in a sack, and the stealthy crouching little door through which they hurried him into a boat, and bore him away to sink him where no fisherman dare cast his net—all shown by torches that blink and wink, as if they were ashamed to look upon the gloomy theatre of sad horrors; past and gone as they are, these things stir a man's blood like

a great wrong or passion of the instant. And with these in their minds, and with a museum there, having a chamber full of such frightful instruments of torture as the devil in a brain fever could scarcely invent, there are hundreds of parrots, who will declaim to you in speech and print, by the hour together, on the degeneracy of the times in which a railroad is building across the water at Venice; instead of going down on their knees, the drivellers, and thanking Heaven that they live in a time when iron makes roads, instead of prison bars and engines for driving screws into the skulls of innocent men. Before God, I could almost turn bloody-minded, and shoot the parrots of our island with as little compunction as Robinson Crusoe shot the parrots in his.

“I have not been in bed these ten days, after five in the morning, and have been travelling many hours every day. If this be the cause of my inflicting a very stupid and sleepy letter on you, my dear Jerrold, I hope it will be a kind of signal at the same time, of my wish to hail you lovingly even from this sleepy and unpromising state. And believe me as I am,

“Always your Friend and Admirer.”

To Forster Dickens had already written with reference to the party which he wished brought together for the reading. “I know you have consented to the party. Let me see. Don’t have any one, this particular night to dinner, but let it be a summons for the special purpose at half-past six. Carlyle, indispensable, and I should like his wife of all things: *her* judgment would be invaluable. You will ask Mac[lise] and why not his sister? Stanny and Jerrold I should particularly wish. Edwin Landseer;

Blanchard; perhaps Harness; and what say you to Fonblanque and Fox? I leave it to you. You know the effect I want to try." Dickens returned, and the reading duly took place on December 2 at Forster's room in 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Not all those whom the novelist named were present, but from Maclise's remarkable sketch it is to be seen that those who attended were—besides the novelist, the host, and the artist, Thomas Carlyle, Laman Blanchard, Douglas Jerrold, Frederick Dickens, Clarkson Stanfield, Alexander Dyce, the Rev. William Harness, and W. J. Fox. The meeting is described fully in Forster's life of Dickens.

Before the close of the year Jerrold's new magazine was announced to commence at the beginning of 1845—announced in a prospectus which is so characteristic of the writer's constant purpose that no apology is necessary for giving it in its entirety. The title fixed upon for the periodical is of itself sufficient indication of the popularity which the author had won. Already Thomas Hood—nearing the close of his brave life—had started *Hood's Magazine*, using the editor's name as trade-mark instead of the publisher's as in the old style, and *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine* was a further recognition of the fact that writers as well as publishers not only had something to do with such miscellanies, but might have names that had a label-value in the eyes of the reading public. The prospectus ran :

“It is intended that this Work shall be mainly devoted to a consideration of the social wants and rightful claims of the PEOPLE; that it shall appeal to the hearts of the Masses of England.

“With no expectation or wish to conflict with or supplant any present publication, it is believed that a Work popularly addressed to the sympathies and common sense of the kingdom, must make for itself a large and hitherto unoccupied sphere of instruction, amusement, and utility.

“It is our belief that the present epoch is pregnant with more human interest than any previous era; as it is also our faith that the present social contest, if carried out on all sides with ‘conscience and tender heart,’ must end in a more equitable allotment of the good provided for all men. To aid, however humbly, in this righteous and bloodless struggle is a truer, a more grateful glory, than any glory blatant in gazettes. And an aroused Spirit begins to feel this. Awakening from a long, vain dream, that showed the many created only to minister to the few, the said Spirit believes—or says it believes—in the universality of the human heart. Hence, it vindicates a common right of happiness: hence, in its new tenderness, it even ‘babbles o’ green fields’ for the health and healthful thoughts of the people. So much the better.

“With Politics—as Party Politics—we meddle not. The day is happily gone by when Parties—like foul-mouthed vixens—assailed each other with unseemly epithets, that mutual abuse might hide mutual corruption and infirmity. We shall deal with Politics only in their social relation, as operating for the good or evil of the community. Whig and Tory—Conservative and Radical—will be no more to us than the names of extinct genera.

“ It will be our chief object to make every essay—however brief, and however light and familiar its treatment—breathe with a PURPOSE. Experience of wider success, and more comprehensive application than have heretofore been enjoyed by any Weekly Periodical, assures us that, especially at the present day, it is *by a defined purpose alone*, whether significant in twenty pages or twenty lines, that the sympathies of the world are to be engaged, and its support ensured.

“ It will also be our aim to make every page exclusively British in its subject, possessing either a present vital interest or tending to the future.

“ Whilst dealing with the highest social claims of our countrymen, we shall not exclude from our pages either Sketch of Character—Tale—History—or Romance. *Far otherwise.* It will be our earnest desire to avail ourselves of all and every variety of literature, *if illustrating and working out some wholesome principle.* Mere stories, made like Twelfth-night heroes, of mere sugar, we shall certainly eschew.

“ Neither would we have the ‘light reader’ take alarm at our graver subjects. They, too, it is hoped, may be discussed with no very violent call upon his wakefulness. It is not necessary that such themes—like bullets—should be cast in lead to do the surest service.

“ In this address we have aimed at brevity. Could we have delivered our intentions in one twentieth part of the space, most willingly would we have done so. As it is, we have left much unsaid, which our First Number must endeavour to say for us.”

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